

GRANDMASTER WONG KIEW KIT'S HOME PAGE  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## QUESTIONS ON XINGYIQUAN



## QUESTION 1

*In preparing to teach the Xingyiquan course, has your opinion/understanding of the art changed. If so, in what ways? Can you take us through your process for preparing to teach the Xingyiquan course?*

— Sifu Matt Fenton

Yes, in preparing myself to teach Xingyiquan, both my opinion and understanding of Xingyiquan have changed much. The process of change is as follows.

I knew that Xingyiquan was simple, and was regarded as kungfu for generals, but I did not realize why it was so. After preparing myself thoroughly to teach it, which included researching into all the resources I could get on Xingyiquan and practicing it according to the accumulated information, I have an in-depth understanding as well as practical experience why it is so.

At first I thought that Xingyiquan was simple because it was based on only five elemental fists. Hence, Xingyiquan practitioners had to compensate their limited techniques by adding Taijiquan and Baguazhang to their training. But my study of Xingyiquan has shown that Xingyiquan is complete by itself. There is no need to add any art to it.

This realization was much helped by my earlier of preparation in teaching Wuzuquan. Indeed, there are many things similar between Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan.

My study of Xingyiquan has led me to realize that its simplicity is not due to its inventor lacking in techniques, but due to him reducing the numerous techniques he already knew to a few fundamental ones.

This is an important concept, and will become clearer if we quantify it. Suppose a martial artist progresses from 1 to 100. The simplicity of his art occurs not at 10 when he has 90 more to learn, but it occurs after he has completed 100 and reduced the numerous 100 to a few fundamentals. It is worthy of note that the inventor of Xingyiquan was Marshal Yue Fei, who is deified as the God of Martial Art.

This realization gives me a better understanding why Xingyiquan is regarded as kungfu for generals, whereas Eagle Claw Kungfu, which was also invented by Yue Fei, but has many sophisticated techniques, is regarded as kungfu for ordinary soldiers.

At first I thought that Xingyiquan, being simple, needs tremendous internal force in order to be applied effectively in combat, and generals rather than ordinary soldiers would have the mind-set to train internal force, which is relatively more boring and more demanding than learning techniques.

But the realization mentioned above now makes me think otherwise. It is not because the generals did not know a lot of combat techniques that they practiced Xingyiquan, it was precisely because they knew a lot of combat

techniques that they could use Xingyiquan, with its few techniques, effectively.

As an analogy, it is not because a master mechanic has not been trained to use a variety of tools; it is precisely that he has been trained to use many different tools that he can now use just one simple tool effectively. Apprentices would have to spend time learning various tools.

Similarly, it was not because Yang Lu Chan did not know many Taijiquan techniques that he only used Grasping Sparrow's Tail in his fighting. It was precisely because he knew many Taijiquan techniques that he could effectively use just Grasping Sparrow's Tail to defeat all challengers. Taijiquan students who wish to be combat efficient would have to spend time learning the many Taijiquan techniques.

Attending the Intensive Shaolin Kungfu Course or the Intensive Taijiquan Course where a comprehensive and in-depth understanding and application of all important kungfu aspects are provided will enhance the accomplishment in Xingyiquan, or any kungfu style, in many ways. Among many benefits, you will learn how to cover yourself adequately for safety first, and how to keep pace effectively with your opponents as they retreat - two skills which Xingyiquan practitioners may not perform efficiently if they do not have a proper foundation.

The combat application of Xingyiquan is marvelous, especially against modern day fighters. Initially I thought that Xingyiquan exponents use their tremendous force to bulldoze into their opponents. My study shows that while they press in relentlessly at their opponents, they cover themselves adequately adhering to the principle of safety first.

Let us examine some scenarios of you fighting an opponent in a free sparring competition.

As soon as he moves in to attack you, or even before he makes the first move, you move in swiftly with a pi-quan, or palm-thrust, covering yourself adequately in your attack. In other words, instead of worrying how to defend yourself against his Kick-Boxing or MMA attacks, you pass the burden back to him right at the start.

All his responses can be classified into the following four possibilities:

1. He is taken aback and does not know what to do, in which case you continue to overwhelm him with a series of pi-quan.
2. He bounces away or retreat, in which case you close the gap immediately and overwhelm him with your series of pi-quan.
3. He wards off your attack and is about to counter or is hesitant on what to do next, you slip away your attacking hand, cover him adequately with your other hand, and overwhelm him with your series of pi-quan attacks.
4. He neutralizes your attack or counter attack immediately, regardless of whether he does so skillfully using no-defence-direct-counter or he sacrifices himself and meet your attack head-on to counter attack, you neutralize his counter and immediately continue to press him with your series of pi-quan.

This strategy is bafflingly simple. You just use one technique in a sequence to

press in relentlessly. It is even better than the strategy I used in my young days when I sparred with many martial artists and remain undefeated. You can use techniques from other kungfu styles for this strategy, like the Black Tiger of Uncle Righteousness, but the nature of Xingyiquan makes this strategy most effective.

In today's low level of sparring, where combatants generously exchange blows, more than 80% of combatants fall under the first three categories. Of the 20% in the fourth category, 15% use straight-forward punches and kicks in their counters. Only 5% are capable of using sophisticated techniques like felling and chin-na.

Hence, if you just practice a series of pi-quan 30 times daily for three months, taking care to cover yourself adequately in your attack, you will beat 80% of the combatants in today's free sparring competitions. If you also spend some time to respond efficiently to surprised or die-hard counters of punches and kicks, you will be able to defeat 95% of your opponents. You can easily give yourself three months to test whether this statement is true.

How would you respond to the 5% of sophisticated counters, like felling techniques and chin-na? In the past, where the standard of fighting was higher, the percentage was also higher.

You don't have to borrow techniques from Taijiquan or Baguzhang or any other styles. You can use techniques from the 12 animal-forms of Xingyiquan, or even from the basic 5 elemental fists themselves if you are skillful.

Suppose your opponent grips your pi-quan with a double-hand chin-na, you can release the grip and simultaneously kick him with a dragon-form. If he attempts to fell you, you can neutralize his leverage advantage, grip his hands away and strike him with double tiger-palms.

If he grasps your neck and executes a Muay Thai knee jab, you can deflect his grasp and knee jab and strike his groin or fell him with a snake-form. If he shoots in for a take-down, you can break his arms or elbows and strike him with double fists using an ostrich-form.

## QUESTION 2

*Is the force generated practising Xingyiquan similar to that of the Iron Wire?*

— Tim Hoorens

The force generated by practicing Xingyiquan is quite different from that generated by practicing Iron Wire. We may, for convenience, look at the difference from the perspective of the nature of force, the way it is trained, and the benefits derived from the force.

The nature of Xingyiquan force is flowing, whereas that of Iron Wire is consolidated. If all other things were equal, Iron Wire force is more powerful. But this does not mean Xingyiquan force is less useful.

Indeed, Xingyiquan force is more useful than Iron Wire force unless the difference in amount of force is large. Having \$1000 in your pocket is more useful than having \$1200 in your bank. But if you have \$12,000 in the bank, and you don't have difficulty drawing it out when you need it, having \$12,000 is better than having \$1000.

Please keep in mind that the description here and elsewhere in this answer is relative. If we take the following four different types of force and line them up from the most consolidated to the most flowing, which is also the hardest to the softest, the progression will be as follows:

Iron Wire → Xingyiquan → Flower Set → Taijiquan

Hence, Xingyiquan force is more consolidated and harder than Flower Set force and Taijiquan force, or reversely less fluid and less soft than the other two. This is so if all other things were equal. We are not equal; we are elite because we have the magic of chi flow, the significance of which will be explained as the answer unfolds.

The orthodox way to train Iron Wire force is the force method. You consolidate energy to become internal force. Then you perform kungfu movements to let the consolidated energy flow. As an analogy, you accumulate money in your bank. Then you go to the bank to draw out some money.

The orthodox way to train Xingyiquan force is the flow method. You let the energy flow, and when the flow has become vigorous it becomes flowing internal force. Because the fist is frequently used in Xingyiquan, flowing force becomes consolidated. You increase your cash flow, and when you have more in-flow than out-flow, you save it in a bank.

In comparison, the dragon hand-form and the open palm are frequently used in Flower Set and Taijiquan respective. It is interesting to note that frequency in the use of the fist corresponds exactly with hardness and consolidation of the force. The fist is most frequently used in Iron Wire where the force is the hardest and most consolidated, and is the least used in Taijiquan where the force is softest and least consolidated.

Our chi flow gives us a big advantage in this respect. Instead of using kungfu movements to let the consolidated energy in Iron Wire to flow, which will take some time to have effect, we use our mind to let the chi flow with immediate effect. Instead of using the fist in patterns like Thrust Punch and Punch Below Sleeves in Taijiquan to consolidate flowing energy into internal force, which will take some time to have effect, we use our mind to consolidate energy into internal force with immediate effect.

Hence our students can feel internal force in an Iron Wire or Taijiquan course in just one day, other students in other schools will need a few months. We shall use this advantage of chi flow to generate internal force in the coming Xingyiquan course at the UK Summer Camp.

If all other things were equal, one can build more internal force practicing Iron Wire than practicing Xingyiquan in the same period of time. My earlier example of \$1000 in cash flow and \$1200 saved in a bank is not given at random. It approximates the amount of force developed in Xingyiquan and Iron Wire in a given period of time.

If one spends an hour practicing Xingyiquan he will generate 1000 units of internal force. If he spends the same hour practicing Iron Wire he will generate 1200 units of internal force. The same hour will give him 800 units and 400 units of internal force practicing the Flower Set and Taijiquan respectively. Of course he must be practicing correctly.

If he practices wrongly, the harmful effects are also in the same proportion. Wrong practice of Iron Wire will give the worst harmful effects, whereas wrong practice of Taijiquan will give the least harmful effects.

But for us, these outcomes may not apply. Because of our skills in chi flow and other advantageous factors, if other students can generate 1200 units of Iron Wire force practicing Iron Wire, our students will generate at least 12,000 units of internal force in the same given time period. Other people not exposed to our training may indignantly accuse us for being arrogant, but it is true. Students in our Iron Wire course developed internal force in a few days what other students would take months.

Will our students practicing Xingyiquan generate at least 10,000 units of Xingyiquan force, which is 10 times that of other students. No, they will generate 12,000 units of internal force. Similarly our students practicing Flower Set or Taijiquan will also generate 12,000 units of internal force, which they can convert to Iron Wire force, Xingyiquan force, Flower Set force or Taijiquan force if they have necessary techniques and skills by attending the respective courses.

In other words, when a student has acquired 12,000 units of internal force by practicing Iron Wire, he will have 12,000 units of Iron Wire force. He will not have Xingyiquan force because he has not practiced Xingyiquan, as the techniques and skills of practicing Xingyiquan and Iron Wire are different.

But when he also practices Xingyiquan, besides the 12,000 units of internal force that he acquires from Xingyiquan in the new practice, he can convert the

earlier 12,000 units of internal force from Iron Wire into Xingyiquan, making a total of 24,000 units of Xingyiquan force. When he returns to Iron Wire, he will have 24,000 units of Iron Wire force. In other words, he has 24,000 units of internal force which he can use as Xingyiquan force or Iron Wire force.

This is the benefit of breadth and depth, which I believe is unprecedented in kungfu history. For other people, except kungfu geniuses like Bai Yi Feng and Pak Mei, training two arts at the same time would distract each other's benefit.

It is easier to practice wrongly with Iron Wire than with Xingyiquan. The damage due to wrong training is also more serious in Iron Wire. Shaolin Wahnam students need not worry about this. Their chi flow will erase whatever harmful effects due to wrong training. But this can be a serious problem to those without the advantage of chi flow.

In terms of benefit, comparing the two types of force the solidness of Iron Wire force is better for combat, especially in bulldozing into an opponent but without neglecting your own safety, whereas Xingyiquan force is better for health. Of course, here we are speaking relatively and presuming all other things being equal.

Iron Wire force is also excellent for health, and Xingyiquan force is also excellent for combat. A more skillful exponent using Xingyiquan force is better in combat than one using Iron Wire force, and a more skillful practitioner using Iron Wire force is healthier than one using Xingyiquan force.

If one wishes to break his opponent's bones, Iron Wire force is more effective. But if he wishes to fell his opponent to the ground, Xingyiquan force is better. If he stays at his stance to fight, Iron Wire force is formidable. It is difficult for an opponent to break through. If he chases after a retreating opponent, Xingyiquan force is excellent, especially with Xingyiquan footwork. It is difficult for an opponent to escape.

In daily life Iron Wire force provides tremendous amount of strength for physical work. Xingyiquan force provides flexibility and agility. If you want to carry your wife or girlfriend in your arms, Iron Wire force is more effective. If she runs and you wish to catch her, Xingyiquan force serves your purpose better.

Xingyiquan force is superior to Iron Wire force in intellectual work. If you wish to plan a project or just enjoy reading a book, Xingyiquan force gives better results.

This is comparing Xingyiquan force with Iron Wire force. If we compare someone having Xingyiquan force or Iron Wire force with another person who has no internal force, the one with internal force will perform better than the other in both physical and intellectual work.

When practitioners have sufficient Iron Wire force or Xingyiquan force, they are unlikely to be sick, but if they are sick, if all other things were equal, those possessing Xingyiquan force will recover faster. On the other hand, it is relatively easier for one with Xingyiquan force to be sick or sustain injury than one with Iron Wire force. If they receive a same strike from an opponent, the

Xingyiquan practitioner will be more injured. But he will also recover faster from the injury. Please note the word "relatively". It is actually much harder for Xingyiquan and Iron Wire practitioners to be sick or injured than for ordinary people.

Those in Shaolin Wahnam who are trained in both Xingyiquan and Iron Wire will have all the benefits of both types of force. It is because we can covert one type of force to the other with our chi flow. When you chase after your wife or girlfriend, you use your internal force as Xingyiquan force. When you want to carry her in your arms, you use your same internal force as Iron Wire force.



### QUESTION 3

*What is the difference between Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan, Baguazhang and Taijiquan in terms of benefits for health and spirituality, form, force training, combat application, philosophy and special internal skills (such as Striking Across Space which is found in Wuzuquan)?*

— Sifu Anton Schmick

Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan, Baguazhang and Taijiquan are all great arts promoting health and spirituality. Any difference explained in the answer is relative. For example, if one art is said to be more effective than another art in promoting health, it does not mean that the other art is not effective.

In comparing the four arts, it is presumed that all other things were equal. This is almost never true in real life, but is necessary as a philosophical concept for meaningful comparison. For example, when it is explained that one is more effective than another in promoting spirituality, the comparison is based on this one factor in isolation. If other criteria are involved, which always happen in real life, like a practitioner of the former art is more diligent than a practitioner of the latter art, the former may obtain more benefit in spirituality than the latter.

The comparison is based on genuine Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan, Baguazhang and Taijiquan at their potential. Please note the two points involved - genuine and potential. Unfortunately today not many people have the opportunity to practice any of these genuine arts. The question of what makes an art genuine is debatable.

The criterion adopted here is that an art is genuine when it is what it is said to be. As all of them are martial arts, if a practitioner uses kick-boxing instead of the art he practices for sparring, it is reasonable to say that what he practices is not genuine. One may practice a genuine art but he may not have reached a high level in it, irrespective of how long he may have practiced. Hence, when we say that his art is one that has the most advanced internal skills, it may not apply to him.

A fourth factor to bear in mind is that we are special, a fact others may not like to hear and probably do not agree with. We are special because of the many advantages we have in the practice of these arts that others may not have, like understanding the underlying philosophy of the training in these arts and the ability to generate energy flow. Because of these advantages, we are able to employ an art for spiritual cultivation when it is not normally possible for other people.

These four points are not only important in our philosophical discussion on the difference between the four great arts, they are actually more important in everyday life. Many students do not derive the benefits they should get although they practice these great arts, not because these arts do not give them the benefits but because what they practice is not genuine, or they practice insufficiently or wrongly.

With these four points in mind, namely that the comparison is relative, that all other things are presumed equal, that we are comparing genuine arts at their potential, and that we are special, let us examine the difference between Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan, Baguazhang and Taijiquan in terms of benefits for health and spirituality, form, force training, combat application, philosophy and special internal skills.

Relatively and in my opinion, Taijiquan is the most effective in providing benefits for health, followed by Baguazhang, Wuzuquan and Xingyiquan in that order of important. As mentioned earlier, this does not mean that Xingyiquan provides little benefits for health. Indeed the health benefits of Xingyiquan are tremendous.

But in the real world today, I believe the biggest group of people who have become unhealthy, like sustaining knee injuries, as a result of their training, both in terms of number as well as proportion, are Taijiquan practitioners. A survey showed that more than 62% of Taijiquan practitioners in the United States suffered from knee injuries, many of whom as a result of their practice. This is shocking. Taijiquan is supposed to be the art amongst the four mentioned here to give the most health benefits. Why do so many Taijiquan practitioners suffer from knee injuries? They practice wrongly. They do not rotate their knees!

Why does Taijiquan, if practiced correctly, amongst the four mentioned arts provide the best health benefits? It is because of energy flow.

All the other three arts generate energy flow too, but Taijiquan generates the most chi flow and in the most conducive way for health. In the other arts, energy flow is consolidated for combat, whereas in Taijiquan though it is also consolidated for combat, the energy flow is fluid and more emphasized for health.

Taijiquan is also the one amongst the four mentioned arts that gives the best benefits for spirituality. The supreme aim of Taijiquan is return to the Tao, which in Western terms means return to God the Holy Spirit. All Taijiquan training places much emphasis on spiritual aspects, like being calm and relaxed, and using mind instead of using strength.

Benefits for spirituality range extensively from the basics of being peaceful and relaxed to the supreme attainment of merging with the undifferentiated Cosmos. Irrespective of which point along the range, Taijiquan, at least in theory, provides the best benefits. But it may not be so in real life, due to one or more of the four conditions mentioned at the start of the answer. In my opinion, due to the nature of their training Xingyiquan practitioners are more highly-spirited than Taijiquan practitioners in real life today.

With this philosophical knowledge and our ability of energy flow, we in Shaolin Wahnam are able not only to avoid the weakness and highlight the strength of any arts we practice, but also to employ the strength of one art in another art where the strength is originally absent.

For example, in Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan and Baguazhang there is no mention or practice to enter Tao, or expand into the Cosmos. But with this skill acquired in Taijiquan, we can apply it in Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan and Baguazhang.

In terms of form, Taijiquan has the largest number of techniques, followed by Baguazhang, Wuzuquan and Xingyiquan in that order. Baguazhang movements are the most complex and elaborated, followed by Taijiquan, Wuzuquan and Xingyiquan. Wuzuquan and Xingyiquan techniques are relatively simple - but their application profound. Hence, a Baguazhang performance is the most beautiful to watch.

All the four arts use the flow method for force training. Taijiquan is the softest and the most fluid, followed in order by Baguazhang, Wuzuquan and Xingyiquan. Although Xingyiquan is known as an internal art, by which many people mistakenly conceptualized as soft, it is quite hard. It is the hardest of all the generally known internal arts.

Why is Xingyiquan internal and is hard? It is internal because its force training is prominently internal, i.e. through flowing energy. It is hard because its force is the result of flowing energy being consolidated.

Why is Taijiquan internal and is soft? It is internal, like Xingyiquan, because its force training is prominently internal, i.e. through flowing energy. It is soft because its force is the result of vigorous energy flow.

Baguazhang and Wuzuquan are in between, with Baguazhang closer to Taijiquan, and Wuzuquan closer to Xingyiquan.

All the four arts are extremely effective for combat. If all other things were equal, like equal internal force, equal knowledge or combat strategies and equal fighting experience, Taijiquan being the one with the largest number of combat techniques would be the most combat effective. But in real life this is not so, simply because other things are not equal.

In my estimate, in real life Xingyiquan practitioners are the most combat efficient, followed in order by Wuzuquan, Baguazhang and Taijiquan. Interestingly, the order of combat efficiency in practical experience is the direct reverse of the order based on theory.

Why is this so? Precisely because Taijiquan and Baguazhang have so many techniques, it takes a longer time to practice them. It is faster to practice the few techniques in Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan. Also, because Taijiquan and Baguazhang techniques are sophisticated, it is harder to master them. It is easier to master the simple techniques of Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan. Given the same time for practice, Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan practitioners are more skillful in their few techniques, whereas Taijiquan and Baguazhang practitioners still have to struggle with their many techniques.

Xingyiquan techniques are the simplest. They are closest to Boxing and instinctive fighting. Hence, even when Xingyiquan practitioners have not undergone systematic combat training, they can still use their Xingyiquan techniques to fight instinctively.

But Xingyiquan is unlike Boxing or instinctive fighting. Its simplicity hides a profundity that Boxers and instinctive fighters can not even fathom. The simplicity of Boxing and instinctive fighting is due to their lack of a great variety of combat techniques and skills. The simplicity of Xingyiquan is the result of crystallizing a great variety of combat techniques and skills into a few fundamentals. If an opponent attempts to fell a Boxer or an instinctive fighter, for example, the Boxer or the instinctive fighter has no techniques to defend against the attack, but a Xingyiquan practitioner has many ways to overcome the situation.

The combat application of Taijiquan and Baguazhang are generally circular, whereas that of Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan are straight. Taijiquan and Baguazhang movements issue mainly from waist rotation, whereas those of Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan issue mainly from the shoulders. When a Taijiquan exponent executes a thrust punch for example, the spiral force comes from the waist, whereas when a Xingyiquan executes a crushing punch, the spiral force comes from the shoulder.

The source of the internal force in both cases is still from the dan tian, but the starting movement as well as focus are different. The training to accomplish the force explosion is also different. By rotating the waist, Taijiquan exponents spiral energy flow from their dan tian to their fist for the thrust punch. By practicing Santi Stance, or the Three-Body Stance, Xingyiquan exponents consolidate energy at their arms to be spiralled out from their shoulder for a crushing punch.

With this knowledge of the underlying philosophy and our ability to generate energy flow, we in Shaolin Wahnam can accomplish both types of exploding force more efficiently and in shorter time. The skills derived from one art can be profitably transferred to other arts. For example, both the techniques and skills of Taijiquan in exploding force from the dan tian using waist rotation, can enrich the techniques and skills of spiraling force from the shoulder in Xingyiquan, and vice versa.

A fundamental philosophical difference between Taijiquan on one hand and Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan, Baguazhang on the other is that Taijiquan is basically practiced for health and spiritual cultivation, whereas the other three arts are practiced for combat.

Like Shaolin Kungfu from which it evolved, Taijiquan was first developed for spiritual cultivation. Its first patriarch, Zhang San Feng, was already a great fighter and very healthy. He had no need to invent another art for fighting or for health. He practiced what was later to evolve into Taijiquan to attain immortality, which he did.

On the other hand, the first patriarch of Xingyiquan was Yue Fei, a famous marshal, who developed Xingyiquan for general in battlefield environment. The first patriarch of Wuzuquan was Bai Yi Feng, who combined the best of five Shaolin styles with combat in mind. The first patriarch of Baguazhang was Tung Hai Chuan, who learned from two unnamed Taoist priests to improve his

fighting ability.

The philosophy and history of these arts have a direct bearing on their training and results, even after many centuries. Thus, amongst their classmates Taijiquan practitioners today talk on topics like how to be more relaxed or how to harmonize with your partners' movements, whereas practitioners of Xingyiquan, Wuzuzhang and Baguazhang talk on topics like how to have more force or how to strike down opponents.

We in Shaolin Wahnam are special. Irrespective of whether we train Taijiquan, Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan or Baguazhang, or all of them, our priority is good health and peak performance as well as longevity and spiritual cultivation, yet we also pay attention to combat efficiency. We are able to do so even when these qualities may not be originally emphasized in some of these arts because of our spread and depth.

As all of them are internal arts, Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan, Baguazhang and Taijiquan are rich in internal skills. Yet, there are fine differences in their emphasis and application of these internal skills.

Xingyiquan is famous for its hard internal force, which may bulldoze into opponents. Such crushing force is effective for breaking walls and opponents' bones. Wuzuquan force is also hard but more flowing, and manifests in such skills like Striking Across Space. Baguazhang force is spiral, famous for getting to opponent's back and tossing them about. Taijiquan force is soft yet powerful, poetically described as silk wrapped round iron.

We in Shaolin Wahnam are unprecedented in our opportunities for learning all these wonderful arts. In the past, if one could learn just one of these great arts, he would be considered very fortunate. Even if he had the rare opportunity, he would have learned two arts at two different times, otherwise they would distract from each other. Not only we can learn different arts at the same time, because of our advantage of spread and depth, we also get more results in shorter time.

## QUESTION 4

*In Xingyiquan students are introduced to, compared to our basic stances, quite new exotic stance like the Santi Stance.*

*In Wuzuquan it happened that we were introduced to the Triangle Stance (which is similar to yet different from the 4/6 stance) and the Dragon Riding Stance (which is similar to yet different from the Bow-Arrow Stance).*

*In Praying Mantis Kung Fu the Seven-Star Stance seems to be quite often used.*

*Could you please elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages of stances like Santi Stance, Triangle Stance, Dragon Riding Stance and the Seven Star Stance compared to our basic stances?*

— Sifu Roland Mastel

In Shaolin Kungfu and Taijiqian, the basic stances are Horse-Riding, Bow-Arrow, False-Leg, Four-Six, Single-Leg, Unicorn and Goat.

While all these basic stances are also found in other kungfu styles, these other kungfu styles frequently use stances that have become characteristic of the styles, like the Triangle Stance and Dragon-Riding Stance of Wuzuquan, the Santi Stance of Xingyiquan, and the Seven-Star Stance of Praying Mantis.

In Wuzuquan, by far the most frequently used stances are the Triangle Stance and the Dragon-Riding Stance. It is worthy of note that the term "Dragon-Riding Stance" is our innovation. Wuzuquan practitioners of other schools would call it the Bow-Arrow Stance.

During the Wuzuquan course in December 2013 in Penang, I mentioned that as the Bow-Arrow Stance in Wuzuquan was quite different from the Bow-Arrow Stance we normally used in Shaolin Kungfu and Taijiqian, it might be a good idea to use a different term for this stance. Roland suggested "Dragon-Riding Stance", and I found the suggestion excellent.

The Dragon-Riding Stance, which is similar to and yet different from the usual Bow-Arrow Stance, is sometimes used for special situations in Shaolin Kungfu and Taijiqian. For example, in the pattern, Single Whip Saves Emperor, in Shaolin Basic Combat Sequence 15, the Dragon-Riding Stance is used. While the two feet in a Bow-Arrow Stance are in line, the two feet in a Dragon-Riding Stance are apart.

The Triangle Stance in Wuzuquan is slightly wider than the Four-Six Stance in Taijiqian. In Wuzuquan the Triangle Stance and the Dragon-Riding Stance are frequently used alternatively. When you ward off an opponent's attack, you use the Triangle Stance. As you move forward immediately to counter attack, you use the Dragon-Riding Stance. If he counter-attacks, you sink back into the Triangle Stance.

Why are the Triangle Stance and the Dragon-Riding Stance frequently used in Wuzuquan instead of the more common False-Leg Stance and Bow-Arrow

Stance found in Shaolin Kungfu and Taijiquan? As it was explained at the Wuzuquan course, it is because of certain advantages. Moving back into the False-Leg Stance to defend, and then moving forward again to the Bow-Arrow Stance to attack, would take more time. Just sinking back the body into the Triangle Stance, without moving the feet, and then shifting the body forward into the Dragon-Riding Stance, again without moving the feet, is faster.

Having the feet slightly apart in the Triangle Stance, instead of in a straight line in the False-Leg Stance, is to facilitate the sinking back of the body. If the feet are in a straight line, it is not only more difficult to sink back, it also places the exponent in a disadvantageous position.

As there is no movement of the feet but only shifting of the body, when a Wuzuquan practitioner counter strikes, he uses a Dragon-Riding Stance instead of a Bow-Arrow Stance. If he wants to use a Bow-Arrow Stance, he would have to move his front leg so that both his feet are in line. This will be slower than just shifting forward to the Dragon-Riding Stance.

The Dragon-Riding Stance would render an exponent's groin exposed. This is the pro and con of the stance. It has the advantage of speed but the disadvantage of exposed groin. A good martial artist would know the pro and con of his techniques, and a great martial artist could change his disadvantage into his advantage. On the contrary, you can see that many martial artists expose their groin without even realizing it.

We aim to be great martial artists. So we shall change the disadvantage of the exposed groin to be an advantage. We use it as a false opening. When an opponent kicks at our groin, we break his kicking leg, fell him onto the ground or use any suitable counter we have prepared but will catch the opponent by surprise.

The Triangle Stance is also frequently used in Xingyiquan. With the hands in front like in the Separate Dragons Technique, but with the palms facing forward, it is called the Santi Stance or Santi Poise. "Santi", which literally means "three bodies", refers to the three external harmonies of feet, body and hands.

Like the Horse-Riding Stance in Shaolin Kungfu and the Three-Circle Stance in Taijiquan, the Santi Poise is the fundamental method in Xingyiquan to build internal force.

Besides remaining in a "focused mode" whereby one gently focuses on the dan tian, or in a "cosmic mode" whereby one thinks of nothing as in the Horse-Riding Stance and the Three-Circle Stance, Xingyiquan practitioners (if they have the chance to learn the secrets of past Xingyiquan masters) also employ the "correspondence mode" and the "expansion mode" in Santi Poise training. We shall practice these two modes during the Xingyiquan course at the UK Summer Camp 2013.

Why are the "corresponding mode" and the "expansion mode" used in the Santi Poise but not in the Horse-Riding Stance and the Three-Circle Stance. It is because it is suitable in the Santi Poise but not in the Horse-Riding Stance and

the Three-Circle Stance.

This discovery from Xingyiquan classics that the Santi Poise employs the "correspondence mode" and the "expansion mode" to develop internal force helped me to resolve a problem I thought for some time in the past, i.e. why unlike in other kungfu styles where stances used to develop internal force are symmetrical, like the Horse-Riding in Shaolin and the Three-Circle Stance in Taijiquan, the Santi Poise used in Xingyiquan is not. I could not find the answer in Xingyiquan classics.

But while preparing myself to teach Xingyiquan at the UK Summer Camp 2013, I found the answer. The asymmetrical position of Santi Poise is necessary for the "correspondence mode" and the "expansion mode" in Santi stance training. In other words, if Xingyiquan practitioners use stances that are symmetrical, like the Horse-Riding and the Three-Circle, they would be unable to apply the "correspondence mode" and the "expansion mode".

Why did Xingyiquan masters use the "correspondence mode" and the "expansion mode" to develop internal force. This is because the two modes effectively contribute to how force is being exploded in Xingyiquan techniques. Or reversely, because of the manner Xingyiquan techniques are applied in combat, the force derived from the "correspondence mode" and the "expansion mode" training method is very useful.

I am not sure which event came first in the historical development of Xingyiquan - whether Xingyiquan masters applied Xingyiquan techniques in combat first, then discovered the two modes of stance training to develop force for the techniques, or whether Xingyiquan masters used the two modes in their stance training first, then applied the force derived from the training to their techniques in combat. There was no mention of this development in Xingyiquan history. But I believe these two developments were connected as they complimented each other.

Besides using Santi Poise as the fundamental method to develop internal force, the fundamental method to explode the internal force derived from the stance training is the flow method. In other words, the Santi Poise is used to build internal force. The flow method is used to explode internal force. This philosophy is not found in Xingyiquan classics, at least not in the classics I have access to. I discovered this connection during my preparation to teach Xingyiquan, and articulate it here.

This does not mean that past Xingyiquan masters did not use the flow method to explode internal force. But they did not explain it or describe it explicitly. It was likely that they might not be aware of the flow method. Past masters did not make a distinction as we do between techniques and skills. They practiced the techniques over and over again diligently, and the skills evolved spontaneously probably without their conscious knowing. But if we understand the underlying philosophy and train accordingly, we can achieve the same result in much shorter time.

The Santi Stance is excellent for this purpose of exploding internal force. It is no



co-incident that all the five elemental fists of Xingyiquan are performed in the Santi Stance.

Not only the Santi Stance provides an ideal form to explode force effectively, combined with the drag-step and the roll-step, it is also excellent for fast, pressing movement for which Xingyiquan is famous. Had Xingyiquan practitioners used the Bow-Arrow Stance or the sideways Horse-Riding Stance, the movement would not be as fast and pressing. The Santi Stance, combined with the drag-step and the roll-step, constitutes some excellent footwork to chase after opponents, giving opponents little or no chance to escape.

At the same time, the hand position of Santi Poise provides excellent cover against possible opponents' attacks, as well as fast, powerful strikes onto opponents.

The disadvantages of the Santi Stance as compared with the Bow-Arrow Stance are that it is short-range and exposes the groin. As mentioned earlier, great martial artists change disadvantages to advantages.

The disadvantageous short-range of the Santi Stance is overcome by swiftly dragging the back leg forward to a T-Step, which is frequently used in Xingyiquan, and this complements Xingyiquan being a forceful, pressing art. The hand technique of pi-quan, or thrust-palm, not only prevents an opponent striking back but striking the opponent instead. It is an ingenious technique.

It is also worth-noting that "pi-quan" literally means "chopping fist", but here the technique is not a chopping fist, it is a thrust palm strike. Had it been a chopping fist, it would be less effective. A thrust-palm is excellent for the purpose. It is also worth-noting that pi-quan which is actually a thrust-palm despite its literal meaning, is the first of the five elemental fists. It being the first of the five important typical Xingyiquan techniques is no co-incident.

The other disadvantage of the Santi Stance exposing the groin is changed to an advantage for being a trap. If an opponent kicks a Xingyiquan exponent's groin or attack it with a low strike, the Xingyiquan exponent would break the leg or attacking arm with a chopping fist followed with heng-quan or diagonal fist to the opponent's dan tian or groin. Alternatively, the Xingyiquan exponent could apply a snake-form to break the opponent's leg or arm with a chopping palm followed with a swinging palm at the opponent's groin or face.

These points regarding the Santi Stance alone, which manifest profundity in simplicity, are sufficient to justify Xingyiquan as kungfu for generals. But it needs great skills, besides technical knowledge, to apply them well, which was the mark of generals rather than ordinary soldiers.

Let us now move to the Seven-Star Stance which is characteristic of Praying Mantis Kungfu. Please take note that another different stance, which is lowering the Unicorn Stance to touching or almost touching the ground, is also called the Seven-Star in the Seven-Star Set of Northern Shaolin I learned from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. The same stance is used in the dragon-form of Xingyiquan, but is called Embrace-Dragon Stance.

Praying Mantis is famous for kicks, but Praying Mantis kicks are very different from the kicks in Taekwondo. Taekwondo kicks are obvious, and usually high. Praying Mantis kicks are purposely made to be inconspicuous and are often low.

Not many people, including modern Praying Mantis practitioners, know that the Seven-Star Stance is a formidable, low and inconspicuous kick meant to break an opponent's shin while engaging or distracting him above with hand techniques. Not many people can escape this devastating kick.

Indeed, I spent some time thinking why such an effective kicking technique was not adopted by other kungfu styles. One reason could be the exclusiveness of its teaching. This formidable technique was taught only to selected, trusted disciples. Other students had no chance to its teaching. In some schools of Praying Mantis, the technique was not even shown. The Seven-Star Stance was replaced with the False-Leg Stance, thus hiding the deadly kick.

Another possible reason why this formidable technique was not widely adopted was that there is a deadly counter, White Crane Steps on Snow, which becomes the nemesis of the Seven-Star Kick. If an opponent applies a Seven-Star Kick on you, and you counter with White Snake Steps on Snow, his shin, rather than your shin, will be fractured.

In the Seven-Star Kick the knee is straight, making it difficult for the attacker to retreat his kicking leg when being counter-attacked. Not wanting to take this risk resulted in the Seven-Star Kick not being adopted in other kungfu styles.

I have thought about this problem and have come up with some excellent solutions should an opponent use the nemesis, White Crane Steps on Snow, when you apply a Seven-Star Kick. One counter is found in both the Monkey Set and the Drunken Eight Immortal, another is found in the Monkey Set, a third is found in the Drunken Eight Immortal, and a fourth is found Shaolin Kungfu which I have shown a few times.

See if you can think out the solution yourself. If you can't, you can contact our Agile Gorilla, Roland, who may give you an answer if he thinks you deserve to have access to these close secrets.

Not many people know the combat application of the Seven-Star Kick in the first place. Lesser people know its counter. But as a competent martial artist, we must know the possible counters to our attacks before we apply the attacks. Hence, if you wish to specialize on the Seven-Star Kick, which will be very useful in free sparring competitions (if the competition rules allow it), you should know what its likely counters are (even when in reality most of your opponents would not know how to counter) and what you are going to do when your opponents apply these counters.

The Seven-Star Stance is also effective for locking an opponent's leg, tripping an opponent, and stepping on an opponent's foot to prevent him moving away.

All these stances - Santi Stance, Triangle Stance, Dragon-Riding Stance, and Seven-Star Stance - are not only extra-ordinary from our basic stances, they also serve very special combat functions.

These special stances, as well as our basic stances, were not thought out from imagination by some smart alec, but evolved from centuries of actual fighting. Early fighters did not use any stances, they fought instinctively.

Over time, those who fought frequently discovered that certain ways of using their feet, body and hands gave them certain advantages. When various effective ways of fighting became institutionalized as kungfu styles, improvements on these fighting methods were passed on from teachers to students as a tradition. Eventually, over many centuries these effective ways of fighting were formalized as stances, footwork, body-movement and hand techniques. We are very lucky to inherit this very rich tradition.

## QUESTION 5

*You mentioned at the last Wuzuquan course that Wuzuquan was the Kung Fu style for generals. Wuzuquan represents excellently profundity in simplicity.*

*I also read that Xingyiquan is regarded as the Kung Fu for generals, also representing profundity in simplicity.*

*Another kungfu style invented by Yue Fei, which is more elaborated and sophisticated, is meant to be the Kung Fu style for soldiers.*

*Could you please elaborate more on the differences between the Kung Fu of Generals and the Kung Fu of Soldiers in terms of techniques-form, energy- force and mind aspects?*

— Sifu Roland Mastel

Xingyiquan, invented from Shaolin Kungfu by the famous Song Dynasty marshal, Yue Fei, is often regarded as the kungfu for generals. Although Wuzuquan, also invented from Shaolin Kungfu by a kungfu genius, Bai Yi Feng, during the Song Dynasty too but before the time of Yue Fei, is not normally called the kungfu for generals, it is like Xingyiquan a classic example of profundity in simplicity, and fit for generals to practice.

On the other hand, Eagle Claw Kungfu, which was invented by Yue Fei too, and has elaborated and sophisticated techniques, is regarded as the kungfu for soldiers. This is interesting. Many people may expect that a kungfu style that is elaborated and sophisticated to be for generals, whereas one that is simple to be for soldiers. But here the reverse is the case. It is therefore illuminating to compare the techniques-form, energy- force and mind aspects of these three kungfu styles.

The fundamental techniques of Xingyiquan are the five elemental fists, which are pi-quan or thrust palm, zuan-quan or spiral fist, beng-quan or crushing fist, pao-quan or cannon fist, and heng-quan or horizontal chop.

Please note that in most Xingyiquan literature pi-quan is usually translated as chopping-fist, and heng-quan as diagonal fist, which are their literal meanings. Here I translate pi-quan figuratively as thrust-palm, and heng-quan as horizontal chop, which describe what these techniques actually are. In other words, the word-by-word meaning of pi-quan is chopping-fist but the technique described by this term is actually thrusting out a palm. The word-by-word meaning of heng-quan is diagonal fist, but the technique is chopping a palm horizontally.

All these five fundamental techniques are simple; there are no flowery movements involved. There are also no preliminary or intermediate movements. In pi-quan, you just thrust out your palm. There is no preliminary movement like circulating your other hand, or intermediate movement like shifting your body backward, as in "Green Dragon Shoots Pearl" of Taijiquan.

In zuan-quan you just spiral out your fist. In beng-quan, you punch out in a

crushing manner, in pao-quan you punch out with one hand while the other hand grips or wards off an opponent's attack. In heng-quan, you chop your palm horizontally. The techniques are simple and straight-forward. But there is much profundity in the simplicity, which students at the coming Xingyiquan course at the UK Summer Camp 2013 will learn and experience, and which I shall briefly explain later.

The stances generally used in Xingyiquan are also simple and straight-forward but they are profound. Though all the kungfu stances are found in Xingyiquan, more than 80% of the time only the Santi Stance is used. "Santi" literally means "three bodies", but actually refers to three aspects of the body, namely feet, body and hands.

When performing the Santi Stance, a practitioner pays attention not only to the three external harmonies of feet, body and hands, but also includes the three internal harmonies of essence, energy and mind. The Santi Stance is effective in implementing these three internal harmonies of essence, energy and mind, which will be briefly explained when we examine the energy-force and mind aspects.

While other kungfu styles use different stances in their movements, like retreating from a Bow-Arrow Stance to a False-Leg Stance, or moving forward to another Bow-Arrow Stance in another leg mode, Xingyiquan uses just the Santi Stance with the drag-step or roll-step, both dragging or rolling forward and backward. The movements are simple but profound, and very effective for combat especially in the present time when opponents bounce about.

The fundamental techniques of Wuzuquan are found in San Zhan or Three-Battle Set, which is the fundamental set of Wuzuquan. As in Xingyiquan, Wuzuquan techniques are simple and straight-forward. There are no flowery movements. There are also no preliminary or intermediate moves. Yet the techniques are profound.

The simplicity of Wuzuquan techniques is manifested in the four-fold principle known as tun-tu-fou-chen, which means "swallow-shoot-float-sink". All these four movements of swallowing, shooting, floating and sinking are performed in one smooth movement as if they were one smooth pattern.

Nevertheless, the most commonly used patterns in Wuzuquan are the flick-hand and catch-hand in defence, and the thrust punch in attack. But the profundity of Wuzuquan is such that the so-called defence techniques can be used for attack, and attack techniques can be used for defence-cum-attack.

Like in Xingyiquan too, while all kungfu stances are found in Wuzuquan, most of Wuzuquan patterns use the Triangle Stance and the Dragon-Riding Stance. These two stances are simple and profound.

The Triangle Stance is like the Santi Stance except it is wider. It is similar to the Four-Six Stance of Taijiquan. The Dragon-Riding Stance is similar to the Bow-Arrow Stance but with the legs apart instead of in a straight line.

In adjusting space for defence and attack, Wuzuquan practitioners need not

move their feet but shift their body backward and forward from the Triangle Stance to the Dragon-Riding Stance, and vice versa. This enables them to be fast.

If they have to move half a space or a space or more forward or backward, they employ the drag-step or the roll-step settling down at the same stance or the other of the Triangle Stance or Dragon-Riding Stance. It is similar to Xingyiquan movement - simple and profound.

In contrast, Eagle Claw Kungfu is elaborated and sophisticated. The fundamental techniques of Eagle Claw are found in the 50 Sequences of Eagle Claw. In each sequence there are a few different techniques. These means there are two or three hundred different techniques in Eagle Claw compared to just five basic techniques in Xingyiquan and three basic techniques in Wuzuquan.

The stances in Eagle Claw are also elaborated and sophisticated. All the kungfu stances - Horse-Riding, Bow-Arrow, False-Leg, Unicorn, Four-Six, Single-Leg - are widely used in Eagle Claw, compared to just the Santi Stance in Xingyiwuan, and the Triangle Stance and Dragon-Riding Stance in Wuzuquan.

As explained in more details in another answer, the simplicity of Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan is not due to lack of a variety of techniques, but due to crystallizing a variety of techniques to a basic few.

When an opponent attacks an Eagle Claw exponent in a particular way, the Eagle Claw exponent would choose from his rich repertoire the appropriate counter. When the opponent attacks in another way, the Eagle Claw exponent would use another appropriate counter. He has a great variety of counters to meet many different attacks.

When an opponent attacks a Xingyiquan exponent, the Xingyiquan exponent would choose any one of his five elemental fists to counter. When the opponent attacks in another way, the Xingyiquan exponent can use the same counter. In fact, he can just use pi-quan to counter any attack!

When an opponent attacks a Wuzuquan exponent, the Wuzuquan exponent would use flick-hand or catch-hand to ward off the attack, and counter attack with a thrust punch. When the opponent attacks in another way, the Wuzuquan exponent would also use the same flick-hand or catch-hand to ward off the different attack, and counter-attack with the same thrust punch!

In other words, an Eagle Claw exponent would use different counters against different attacks, whereas a Xingyiquan exponent or a Wuzuquan exponent would use the same counter against a great variety of different attacks. Obviously, it is not just the techniques that make the counters effective. The Xinyiquan or Wuzuquan exponent needs much knowledge and skills. Hence Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan are kungfu for generals.

Let us examine some examples. Take a typical attack, a thrust punch and see how a Eagle Claw exponent, a Xingyiquan exponent and a Wuzuquan exponent would counter.

When an opponent throws a thrust punch at an Eagle Claw exponent, the Eagle Claw exponent can counter in more than a dozen ways. The counter movements are sophisticated and elaborated.

When a thrust punch is thrown at a Xingyiquan exponent, he can counter with a pi-quan, or any one of the other five elemental fists. Does he need to ward off the thrust punch before executing a pi-quan? No, he doesn't, the defence is already incorporated in the attack. The counter movement is simple and profound. This is a hallmark of kungfu for generals.

To counter a thrust punch, a Wuzuquan exponent would use flick-hand or catch-hand to ward off the attack, then counter with his thrust punch. A Wuzuquan master may not need his thrust punch. He could disable the opponent with just the flick-hand or the catch-hand. These movements are simple and profound. Doesn't he need to strike the opponent to disable him? No, the attack is already incorporated in the defence. This is another hallmark of kungfu for generals.

Okay, a thrust punch is straight-forward. What about a double round-house kick, a sophisticated felling attack or an elaborated chin-na, can a Xingyiquan exponent use a pi-quan or a Wuzuquan exponent use a flick-hand or catch-hand to disable the opponent? Yes, he can, and he can choose to do so as soon as the opponent starts his attack, or during the process of his attack, or at the completion of the attack. It is not for no reasons that Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan are kungfu for generals.

How the Xingyiquan or Wuzuquan exponent does so is a close secret, i.e. secret taught within close doors to selected disciples. This and other close secrets are not even mentioned in Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan classics. I believe not many Xinyiquan and Wuzuquan practitioners know them.

I discovered them while preparing to teach Wuzuquan and Xingyiquan. Those who attended the Wuzuquan course in Penang in December 2012 would have no difficulty not only in using basic Wuzuquan techniques to counter any attack, but also using basic Xingyiquan techniques to counter any attack even when they have not learned Xingyiquan from a living teacher but only by watching Xingyiquan techniques shown on videos. This is an example of breadth and depth.

Now, if these close secrets are not mentioned in Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan classics, how do we know they are Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan counters? The counters use typical Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan techniques and skills, and follow Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan philosophy. If past Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan masters did not use these counters, they would not have survived. They would have been defeated many times over by these attacks.

In the spirit of Zen, even if these counters are not exactly the same as what past Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan masters used, it does not matter. The techniques and skills used, and the philosophy involved are typically of Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan, not of Kick-Boxing, Wrestling, Karate, Choy-Li-Fatt, Taijiquan or any other martial art. Most significantly, these counters work. We tried them out at

the recent Wuzuquan course. We shall try them out in the coming Xingyiquan course.

Let us now compare the energy-force aspect of Eagle Claw, Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan to appreciate the difference between force training in kungfu for soldiers and kungfu for generals.

The orthodox approach in Eagle Claw force training is external, like grabbing Y-shape branches, gripping jars, pulling poles out from the ground, and in extreme cases, tearing back from trees. The Eagle Claw of such practitioners is powerful, but the training may spoil their hands especially in drastic methods like tearing bark from trees.

The force developed is localized, i.e. it is used only for Eagle Claw and not for other benefits, like enhancing vitality and longevity. Indeed, the external training may distract from vitality and longevity if practitioners are not careful, and the harm is insidious. They may, for example, cause blockage in their arms and stress to their spirit if they pull poles or tear barks brutally.

The force is also limited by age, size and gender. An elderly person, a small-size person and a woman would be less forceful than a young person, a big-size person and a man.

The force training in Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan is internal, and is holistic. It is also not limited by age, size and gender.

Xingyiquan force and Wuzuquan force are not limited to the body part where training is being focused, but is applicable to the whole body. While only the fingers of Eagle Claw practitioners are powerful, the whole body of Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan practitioners is powerful.

Xingyiquan force and Wuzuquan force are not limited to combat. They contribute to good health, vitality, longevity, mental freshness and spiritual joys. For example, while the grip of an Eagle Claw practitioner is powerful, he may not have more stamina or can comprehend his reading better due to his force training. But force training in Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan can have these and other benefits. Herein lies the big difference between internal force training for generals and for soldiers.

The orthodox method of force training in Xingyiquan is practicing the Santi Stance. It is interesting to note that while the stances for force training in other kungfu styles like the Horse-Riding Stance in Shaolin and the Three-Circle Stance in Taijiquan are symmetrical, the Santi Stance is not. This was a puzzling question for me for some time in the past.

But I found the answer while preparing to teach Xingyiquan at the UK Summer Camp. From Xingyiquan classics I discovered that Xingyiquan practitioners in the past used what were called the "correspondence mode" and the "expansion mode". The asymmetrical Santi Stance is suitable to employ these modes, and the internal force developed is suitable for the five elemental fists of Xingyiquan.

In symmetrical stances like the Horse-Riding and the Three-Circle, internal force



is focused at the dan tian. In the Santi Stance using the "correspondence mode" and the "expansion mode", internal force roots a practitioner to the ground as well as is focused at his arms.

Hence, in Shaolin Kungfu and Taijiquan which use symmetrical stances to build internal force at the dan tian, waist rotation is needed to channel spiral force from the dan tian to the hands. Of course, advanced practitioners whose body is already filled with flowing energy, can generate internal force from their wrists.

The mechanics of force explosion in Xingyiquan is different. Because the asymmetrical Santi Stance has built internal force at their shoulders as well as rooting them to the ground, Xingyiquan practitioners can explode force from their shoulders without rotating their waist. Advanced practitioners, of course, can explode force from their wrists.

Would these different ways of exploding force distract each other? In other words, would a practitioner of Shaolin Kungfu or Taijiquan who has developed internal force at his dan tian and explodes force by rotating his waist have unfavorable effect if he also practices Xingyiquan?

Yes, it would. The mechanics are different and may confuse him. The shifting of force from the dan tian to the shoulders and vice versa would minimize the force.

But we are different. For us the two different methods would enhance our results. In other words, if you have practiced Shaolin or Taijiquan force training, and now practice Xingyiquan, your force will be better. It is because of two main factors. We understand the underlying philosophy and we have the magic of chi flow.

How do Xingyiquan practitioners channel their energy to strike their opponents if they do not have the magic of chi flow like we do. They attain their chi flow by performing the five elemental fists, but normally they are not aware of the chi flow, and it is only along their arms, unlike in our case where we can use it to progress to induced chi flow movement to overcome pain and illness.

This is another example of the benefit of breadth and depth. Not only our students, having practiced Shaolin Kungfu, Taijiquan or Shaolin Cosmos Chi Kung, can attain more force in shorter time, our students can also have other benefits that others who only practice Xingyiquan would not have.

The orthodox method of force development in Wuzuquan is through practicing San Zhan and Abdominal Breathing. San Zhan movements provide the energy flow, and Abdominal Breathing builds up the energy.

Wuzuquan practitioners also practice the Horse-Riding Stance, but its practice is not as much emphasized as in Shaolin Kungfu. The Wuzuquan Horse-Riding Stance is both narrower and higher than that in Shaolin, and the fists are held not at the waist but at breast level.

My experience of learning internal force while learning Wuzuquan in Sifu Chee

Kim Thong's school should be well known by now. It is worthy to note that my sifu, Sifu Chee Kim Thong, was regarded as a living treasure of the People's Republic of China, his Wuzuquan school was (and still is) famous for internal force, and I was a fast learner. But after more than two years of San Chan and a year of Abdominal Breathing, I did not have any internal force.

Yet, at the Wuzuquan course in December 2013, course participants not only could develop internal force using Wuzuquan methods, but also used San Zhan patterns to generate internal force similar to what is done in Wing Choon Siu Lin Tou, Taijiquan, Flower Set, and Iron Wire. It was true that the Wuzuquan course participants had many years of previous kungfu experience, which would be a big advantage. But I also had many years of kungfu experience before I learned Wuzuquan.

We could attain remarkable results in a short time because we understood the underlying philosophy of these various force training methods and had the benefit of chi flow. In contrast, when I first learned Wuzuquan I did not understand the underlying philosophy, and did not have chi flow. My Wuzuquan classmates also did not know the philosophy or have chi flow. Then, how was it that they had tremendous internal force? It was developed through years of dedicated training.

Regardless of whether practitioners know the philosophy or have chi flow, there are characteristic differences in both the methods and the benefits of force training between kungfu for generals and kungfu for soldiers.

In kungfu for soldiers the force training is external and the benefits localized and are limited by age, size and gender. The results are usually faster.

In kungfu for generals the force training is internal and the benefits holistic and are not limited by age, size and gender. The results are usually slower but more lasting.

But we are different. Although we use internal methods, we obtain results in shorter time than those who use external methods. As a rough guide, others who use internal methods would take years to obtain some reasonable results, those who use external methods would take months, but we only take days!

I believe that external methods may not actually be faster than internal methods. Those who use external methods achieve results faster because both the methods and the results are visible. When a practitioner pulls poles from the ground, for example, he knows he needs strength to pull the pole and he can see it pulled from the ground when he succeeds. When he is lacking in strength or makes mistakes in his pulling, he knows it and can correct himself immediately.

But when a Xingyiquan practitioner practices Santi Stance or a Wuzuquan practitioner practices San Zhan, he normally does not know what is happening inside him, and cannot see that energy, which will eventually give him internal force, is building. When he makes mistakes, which are more easily made in internal methods than in external methods, he may not know, and he also does

not know that this mistake hinders his progress.

If an internal art practitioner knows what is happening, his progress may be as fast as that of an external art practitioner. If he also can generate a chi flow before he starts his force training, he can speed up his progress remarkably.

This is my theory, and is contrary to what is traditionally believed. Traditionally it is believed that practitioners take many years to practice internal methods to develop internal force, and this is true. If my theory, which is based on actual experience of our students taking a short time using internal methods to develop internal force, is found to be true, it may revolutionize this aspect of kungfu philosophy.

Let us now examine the mind aspects between kungfu for soldiers and kungfu for generals.

As there are many techniques in Eagle Claw Kungfu, its practitioners have many patterns to attach their mind to. In contrast, not only there are few techniques in Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan, but also these techniques are simple. So there are few patterns for Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan practitioners to attach their mind to.

These same facts, depending on different variables, can have different results.

For example, because there are many places to tag their mind, it is easier for Eagle Claw practitioners to be mentally focused. On the other hand, because there are many places for them to tag their mind, it is also easier for them to be confused.

If they are focused, their attention is short-spanned, as they have to move to another point of focus soon. If their mind is wandering, they have more chances to bring their mind into focus again.

For Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan practitioners, because there are few and simple techniques, it may be easier or it may be more difficult for them to be mentally focused. When they are focused, their attention is long-spanned. But if their mind wanders, they would have to let it wander for some time before having a chance to bring it back into focus.

The mind of generals is stronger and better-trained than the mind of soldiers. Hence, Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan are more conducive for generals. Generals are more likely to be focused than confused, and maintain their attention for a longer time than letting their mind wander.

In this respect, Eagle Claw Kungfu is more conducive for soldiers. They are more likely to have short-spanned focus, and when their mind wanders, they have more opportunities to bring it back into focus.

But this does not mean that if you have the mind of a general, Eagle Claw Kungfu is not good for you. As you have long-spanned focus, you can easily perform the many elaborated and sophisticated Eagle Claw patterns in a continuous state or relaxed mindfulness. If your mind wanders, thought this seldom happens to a general's mind, you can quickly bring it back into focus.

What is a good progression for a practitioner who does not have the mind of a general but wishes to have one? He should start with kungfu for soldiers. The many patterns in Eagle Claw Kungfu provides him with good opportunities to have his mind focused. When his mind is strong and he can hold his attention for some time, he can progress to kungfu for generals, like Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan. If he starts straight away with kungfu for generals, his mind may not be strong enough to stay focused, and when his mind wanders he has less chance to bring it back into focus.

Similarly, Xingyiquan and Wuzuquan force training requires the mind of a general. Those who have only the mind of soldiers may have to settle for less mentally demanding external training methods like gripping jars, pulling poles from ground and tearing barks off trees of Eagle Claw.

The Santi Stance looks simple, but it demands much mental focus as well as mental relaxation just to remain at the stance for some time. Practicing Santi Stance in the "correspondence mode" or the "expansion mode" requires more mental focus and relaxation.

Some people may be surprised that mental focus and mental relaxation are required at the same time, mistakenly thinking that these two mental states are self-contradictory. In other words, they mistakenly think that when one is focused he cannot be relaxed, and vice versa. This mistaken view is due to the limitation of words. All our students know that it is possible to be focused and relaxed at the same time. We do this all the time when we start our chi kung and kungfu practice.

If one's mind is weak or untrained, he may be unable to be focused and relaxed for any length of time. At best he may not develop internal force, because his distracted or stressful mind hinders the building of energy. Worse, he may cause energy blockage resulting in adverse effects.

Similarly, being mentally focused and relaxed for some length of time is necessary to generate energy flow and develop internal force when practicing San Zhan and Abdominal Breathing in Wuzuquan. Distracted or stressful mind would not bring good results or may bring adverse effects.

Reversely, practicing Santi Stance, San Zhan and Abdominal Breathing will enhance a practitioner's mental focus and mental relaxation. This will lead to mental strength and mental clarity, which are not only important for generals in combat but also leaders in daily life. Ordinary soldiers and ordinary people who lack mental strength and mental clarity will merely follow instructions.

It is fitting to conclude this answer on kungfu for generals and kungfu for soldiers with a short story. Last year before teaching some courses in Bern, Roland kindly took me sight-seeing in a comfortable car. While going up a scenic hill, we passed some cyclists struggling uphill on their bicycles. "They are soldiers and we are generals," I told Roland. "They toll and sweat and use more time but cover only a short distance, while we enjoy driving in a comfortable car and cover a lot of distance in just a short time.

## QUESTION 6A

*Is it good to practice certain types of Kung Fu in order to balance ourselves?*

*For example, if we need more confidence and decisiveness, is it good to practice Xinyiquan? And if we are too abrasive, is it good to practice Taijiquan or Baguazhang?*

— Sifu Mark Blohm

Yes, for other people it is good to practice certain types of kungfu to balance their character. For example, if they lack confidence and decisiveness, it is good to practice types of kungfu like Xingyiquan, Choy-Li-Fatt and Hoong Ka Kungfu to boost their out-going qualities. If they are too abrasive, it is good to practice types of kungfu like Yang Style Taijiquan, Fujian White Crane and Northern Shaolin Huaquan to modulate their aggressive behavior.

However, for us our training, irrespective of whether it is Shaolin, Taijiquan, Xingyiquan, Baguazhang or any kungfu or chi kung styles will harmonize students' character. If our students are too out-going to start with, the training will sober them. If they are too reserved, the training will stimulate them.

The two main reasons for this wonderful benefit, which may not be present in other schools, is our training of spirit and energy. When our spirit is purified and our energy harmonizes, we will attain physical, emotional, mental and spiritual balance. It is not for no good reason that we claim our arts to be elite.

## QUESTION 6B

*In the past, Xingyiquan masters would practice only San Ti Shi to develop internal force. Yiquan masters would probably practice San Ti Shi as well as the Three Circles Stance.*

*Both San Ti Shi and the Three Circles Stance are rather high in posture, emphasizing the development of chi flow. The flowing internal force would be similar to that of a Taijiquan or Baguazhang exponent.*

*Yet, Xingyiquan patterns are hard and explosive in nature. Did Xingyi exponents naturally learn at an earlier stage how to consolidate their flowing chi developed from San Ti Shi into hard internal force like that of Iron Wire?*

— Stephen

Besides San Ti Shi or Three-Body Poise, Xingyiquan as well as Yiquan masters also practiced other stances, but their main emphasis was Three-Body Poise.

Besides building up internal force, the Three-Body Poise using the extension mode and the corresponding mode, which we shall learn at the Xingyiquan course at the UK Summer Camp, also extends energy to the hands, and root exponents to the ground.

There are no special techniques in Xingyiquan, like in the Iron Wire Set, to consolidate flowing internal force derived from Three-Body Poise into hard, explosive force for combat. Then, from where Xingyiquan masters derived their hard, explosive force for which they were famous?

Like in Taijiquan but in a different way, Xingyiquan practitioners derive their hard, explosive force from their set practice, especially the Five-Elemental Fists. We shall learn this at the Summer Camp Xingyiquan course.

It is an ingenious method. Instead of hitting sand-bags and lifting weights as in many external arts, Xingyiquan practitioners practice their Three-Body Poise and the Five-Elemental Fists, and the internal force they develop is not only less demanding in their training and more powerful in combat, it also contributes to good health, vitality, longevity and daily efficiency.

## QUESTION 6C

*I would like to ask about the relationship of Xingyiquan to the Spear:*

*The spear was known as "The King of Weapons"; what are the crossovers between spear combat in general and empty-handed Xingyiquan in particular. and how does the formidable reputation of the spear transfer into the combat efficiency of empty-handed Xingyiquan?*

— Sifu Andy Cusick

The spear is known as "the king of weapons", and Xingyiquan is known as "kungfu for generals". Throughout history the spear was the choice weapon of generals.

There are many cross-overs from the spear. In fact, all the five elemental fists of Xingyiquan came from spear techniques.

The spear is regarded as the king of weapons because technically the spear thrust is the most difficult to defend against. It was a tradition in the past that anyone learning a kungfu weapon should learn how to defend against or counter a spear thrust. The most important of unarmed Xingyiquan technique, pi-quan or chopping fist, despite its name, resembles a spear thrust.

Another important technique of the spear is circling. This circling movement of the spear is found in the spiral movement of beng-quan and zuan-quan, or crushing fist and spiral fist.

The spear is sometimes used to ward off an opponent's weapon, followed with a spear thrust. This is found in pao-quan, or cannon fist, warding off an opponent's attack or guard with one hand and striking him with the other.

The remaining of the five elemental fist, heng-quan or diagonal fist which is actually a horizontal chop, resembles a little known but deadly spear technique known as "bai-tou" or "shaking head", which is slicing an opponent's neck with a spear-head. In unarmed Xingyiquan, this became the heng-quan.

Even their subtle applications, which are secrets, are similar. If you slice your opponent's neck with your spearhead, it is obvious and he can counter easily. But if you attack with a spear-thrust, and as he dodges sideways or wards off your attack, you circle round his defence and slice his neck, you often catch him by surprise. If you attack your opponent with a horizontal chop, it is obvious and he can counter easily. But if you attack with a thrust-palm, and as he dodges sideways or wards off your attack, you circle round his defence and slice his neck, you often catch him by surprise.

## QUESTION 6D

*In many Xingyi techniques I've seen, palm attacks seem to be prominent. Are there specific force training methods in Xingyi to develop powerful palms?*

— Sifu Markus Kahila

Fist attacks are prominent in Xingyiquan, not palms. "Xingyiquan fists, Baguazhng palms" is a common kungfu saying. Taijiquan, on the other hand, has a mixture of palms and fists.

There are no specific force training methods in Xingyiquan to develop powerful palms or fists. The force is developed through the Santi Poise and the flow-method of performing Xingyiquan sets. The Santi Poise accumulates the energy, performing Xingyiquan sets consolidates the energy into tremendous internal force.



## QUESTION 6E

*You've mentioned that Xingyiquan can help one train in the element of threat.*

*How can one practice against the element of threat in solo practice? Should we imagine our opponent threatening our life to increase the adrenaline and fear one feels when confronted in such a situation?*

*How can we translate this over into our daily lives? I feel this would be especially useful for those who have high stress jobs.*

— Stephen

The methods you suggest are third-class. Xingyiquan is first-class. It has far better methods.

It is even better that the methods are already incorporated into normal Xingyiquan practice. In other words, you don't have to lift weights, hit sand-bags separately and work yourself into a frenzy to charge ferociously into opponents, and let opponents charge ferociously at you throwing punches and kicks wildly at you which you learn to condition yourself taking. These are third-class methods for ordinary soldiers. Xingyiquan uses first-class methods for generals.

Performing the Five Elemental Fists with pressing footwork provides force and threat at both the giving and the receiving ends. Without sacrificing your own safety, you press into your opponents forcefully and threateningly, letting him worry how to handle your attack instead of you worrying how to handle their attacks.

If your opponents are skillful enough to counter attack, you stop him immediately and continue your pressing attack, you do not retreat and let him take the attacking initiative. Xingyiquan is just pressing forward, with hardly any retreating. But you press forward without sacrificing your own safety.

One may read about such principles, but to acquire the skills and techniques to do so he must learn personally from a competent teacher, or better still from a master.

## QUESTION 6F

*Is Xingyiquan well-known for any particular weapons, like Taijiquan for the sword, Baguazhang for its knife, and Shaolin for its staff. I've heard that Xingyiquan was associated with the spear, but I've not yet run across any modern exponents practicing that weapon.*

— Frederick Chu

Xingyiquan is well known for the spear.

The two best known Xingyiquan masters, Yue Fei (12th century) and Ji Long Feng (17th century), were expert in the use of the spear.

Yue Fei (12th century), the inventor of Xingyiquan, used his metal spear on horseback to defeat the Tartars. Ji Long Feng, who popularized Xingyiquan, was so skillful with the spear that he was nicknamed the "god of the spear".

All the five elemental fists of Xingyiquan came from spear techniques.

Indeed, not many Xingyiquan practitioners today practice the spear. But there is a video on Youtube of a Xingyiquan master performing the Five-Elemental Spear. It is not impressive to watch but is very combat effective. My personal opinion is that the spear he uses is too flappy. It would be better if he had used a spear with a hard shaft.

It is a norm today that kungfu practitioners not only of Xingyiquan but of all styles do not pay much attention to classical weapons. Probably they think that classical kungfu weapons are no longer relevant as they are not used today for fighting. But there are still benefits learning classical weapons. Besides upholding tradition, learning classical weapons demonstrate more immediately some important lessons for unarmed combat.

## QUESTION 66

*If I remember correctly, in Baguazhang there were not many patterns that were considered "compassionate" (as in comparison with Shaolin Kungfu), unless we use release force. For Xingyiquan, created to be as effective as possible on a battlefield, are there "compassionate" patterns, to spare the opponent?*

*In Baguazhang we learned to get behind an opponent very fast, and in my small experience, when circle walking one of the benefits is a strong all around awareness. In Xingyiquan, when on a battlefield, one could be attacked from all sides. Does training Xingyiquan also generate an all around awareness as in Baguazhang?*

— Tim

In Xingyiquan if a practitioner has sufficient force all strikes are combat ending, or lead to combat ending strikes. There are no compassionate Shaolin chin-na or Wudang dim-mak. But, as you have rightly pointed out, a Xingyiquan exponent can be compassionate by not using full force, or he uses release-force.

By comparison Baguazhang is more compassionate. There are Baguazhang patterns like "Control a Running Horse", "Black Bear Fells Tree" and "Golden Eagle Catches Chicken", where a Baguazhang exponent keeps an opponent at bay, fells him onto the ground to subdue him, or grips his waist to disable his fighting ability.

Shaolin Chin-Na is very compassionate. Instead of breaking an opponent's bones or damaging his internal organs, a Shaolin exponent uses chin-na to disable an opponent temporarily, and the latter can later recover by seeking the help of a competent healer.

Translating dim mak as a "death-touch" is due to shallow understanding. While it is true that a dim mak master could kill an opponent by apparently touching him, the main purpose of dim mak is to disable an opponent at the time of combat, but the latter could recover by seeking the help of a competent healer.

Yes, Xingyiquan training can generate a sense of all-round awareness. Santi Poise is a good exercise for this purpose.

Many people think that Xingyiquan is only going forward, and will be inadequate when attacked from a side or from the back. This is not true. As a complete martial art Xingyiquan is, a Xingyiquan practitioner can effectively counter any attack from a side or the back.

This is already provided for in the two fundamental sets, Five-Elemental Continuous Fist and Twelve Animal-Form Continuous Fist. But as in all other kungfu sets, practitioners are not aware of the effective applications in the sets though they can perform the patterns beautifully. We shall be practicing these applications at the Xingyiquan course.

## QUESTION 6H

*When General Yue Fei developed and taught the "Kungfu for Generals," what qualities was he looking for in prospective students? What would make the General decide that this man would be taught Eagle Claw kung fu while that man would be taught Xingyiquan? Are there certain physical, mental, and/or spiritual qualities that lend themselves best to Xingyiquan?*

— Frederick Chu

There was no classical record for the answer, but I believe Marshal Yue Fei did not make any conscious choice of physical, emotional, mental or spiritual qualities when teaching some Xingyiquan and others Eagle Claw Kungfu.

To the generals, he taught Xingyiquan, and to the ordinary soldiers he taught Eagle Claw. It is helpful to know that Yue Fei did not teach them as a hobby. He taught them to serve expedient needs, so that the generals and the ordinary soldiers would be more efficient in battles. And this proved to be so in real life.

## QUESTION 61

*You highlighted that the Xingyiquan offered at the UK Summer Camp would be an excellent preparation for those who wish to attend free sparring competitions. You mentioned if I am correct that Xingyiquan, among other styles would reflect Boxers and Kick Boxers way of fighting as most similar.*

*Could you please explain why Xingyiquan would suit the needs of students who wish entering competitions so good?*

— Sifu Roland Mastel

Your question is excellent not only for those who wish to take part in free sparring competitions but also for all kungfu practitioners who regard kungfu as martial art and not as gymnastics, dance or kick-boxing.

My earlier impression was that of all kungfu styles Xingyiquan most reflects Boxers' and Kick-Boxers' way of fighting. As today most competitors fight like Boxers and Kick-Boxers in free sparring competitions, regardless of what martial arts they practice, Xingyiquan would be most useful to our competitors who wish to enter free sparring competitions and win.

This is implementing Sun Tzu's perennial advice of knowing your enemy and knowing yourself, you will win a hundred battles out of a hundred. You know how your opponents fight and how you fight. Then you devise a way of fighting that your opponents do not know or cannot defend against so that you can easily defeat them. This is apply your planned and trained combat sequence relentlessly on your opponents.

This conclusion was made before I started to prepare myself to teach Xingyiquan. This conclusion was based on my wide understanding and experience of kungfu. I believed, and still believe, that if our competitors followed this strategy, they would have at least 95% chance of defeating their opponents in free sparring competitions. The main problem is that they may not follow this strategy though they honestly think they do.

But when I went deeper into Xingyiquan in preparation to teach it, I was amazed at its depth and discovered, besides other invaluable insights, an even better way for our competitors to win free sparring competitions. It is almost a joke when told to most other people: just apply a simple Xingyiquan sequence I am going to teach at the Xingyiquan course.

It excellently suits the needs of competitors wishing to win free sparring competitions. The two most important needs are to be safe from the opponents' attacks, and to move in effectively with little chance of opponents escaping. The Xingyiquan sequence fulfills the two needs even more effectively than the earlier strategy I taught. And the sequence is so bafflingly simple!

This is only one of the many exciting benefits participants will get at the Xingyiquan course. There are so many exciting benefits that the five-day course can only introduce them to a taste of the benefits. Course participants will have

to do a lot of training on their own after the course.

## QUESTION 6J

| *Sifu, what is the highest attainment in Xingyiquan?*

— *Sifu Matt Fenton*

For most people, the highest attainment in Xingyiquan is superb combat efficiency.

Xingyiquan was invented for this purpose. It was invented by Yue Fei for generals to win battles in the battlefield. It was not invented with the aims of curing illness, improving health, enhancing vitality and longevity, or experiencing spiritual joys.

But for us in Shaolin Wahnam, we can have all these wonderful benefits besides combat efficiency. In fact, we have reverse the priority. Of course we want combat efficiency. We do not want to make a mockery of practicing a great martial art. But we place more importance on good health, vitality, longevity, mental freshness and spiritual joys.

## QUESTION 7

*In the recent Iron Wire courses, Sifu has used the flow method as an alternative to the force method. Does this opportunity, to use the flow method, exist in other kung fu sets and styles? For example, does Xingyiquan have this opportunity and can we use this flow method in some parts of Flower Set force training?*

— Sifu Mark Blohm

Once you have acquired the flow method you can apply it in any set, including in such external arts like Karate and Taekwondo.

On the other hand, once you have acquired the force method, you can apply it in any set, including in such internal arts like Taijiquan, Baguazhang and Xingyiquan. This is an excellent example of spread and depth.

If you apply the flow method successfully in Karate and Taekwondo, your performance will not look like Karate and Taekwondo, it will look like Taijiquan or Flower Set using Karate and Taekwondo forms.

If you apply the flow method unsuccessfully, it will also not look like Karate and Taekwondo, it will look like a dance in Karate or Taekwondo forms. As not many people have the opportunity to learn the flow method, dancelike performance is usually the result, especially with forms that are already flowing and graceful like Taijiquan and Flower Set.

If you apply the force method successfully in Karate and Taekwondo, your performance will not look like Karate and Taekwondo, it will look like high-level Shaolin Kungfu in Karate or Taekwondo forms. If you do it wrongly, it will also not look like Karate and Taekwondo, it will look like isometric exercise using Karate or Taekwondo forms.

You can find some examples on Youtube of Karate masters performing isometric exercise, mistaking it as the force method. A student who used this isometric method before told me that his master warned him not to practice often as it would shorten his life. I remember being greatly puzzled why masters still practiced it or taught it to their students when they knew it was harmful.

But if you practice the force method correctly, even using Karate and Taekwondo forms, it will enhance your health, vitality and longevity, besides giving you internal force and mental clarity. You will get better result in shorter time if you use Shaolin forms, like Iron Wire, because Shaolin forms are more conducive for the force method.

If you apply the force method to internal arts like Taijiquan, Baguazhang and Xingyiquan, your performance will not look like what people think Taijiquan, Baguazhang and Xingyiquan to be, but look like what Taijiquan, Baguazhang and Xingyiquan were in the past. How do we know what these arts looked like in the past? We can have a good picture from descriptions in Taijiquan, Baguazhang and Xingyiquan classics, some of which actually explained the process of the force method, like stamping of feet, consolidating flowing energy into force, and



exploding force with a shout.

It is helpful to remember that the terms "flow method" and "force method" are our innovations, created for convenience. The terms are created by us, but the techniques or methods are not, though with the advantage of breadth and depth we have improved on them. The techniques and methods were used by past masters, though they did not call them the flow method or the force method, and probably they might not be aware of what was subtly happening inside them while they trained though they were fully aware of the techniques and methods they used.

For example, past Taijiquan masters knew that to generate internal force they had to repeat certain movements hundreds of times, but they might not know that these repeated movements generated an energy flow, and they did not know that this occurred only when they were in what we now call a chi kung state of mind. Knowing all this, we can achieve similar result by repeating the same movement just 30 or 40 times.

Past Shaolin masters knew that if they repeated certain movements like those in the Iron Wire Set hundreds of times and made appropriate sounds, they could consolidate internal force. But they might not know that there must be energy flow first, before internal force could be consolidated, and that the sounds not only prevented energy blockage but also promoted better energy flow. Knowing all this enable us to attain similar result in much shorter time.

Yang Style Taijiquan and Iron Wire represent the full range of the flow method and the force method. In orthodox tradition, Yang Style Taijiquan employs 100% flow method, whereas Iron Wire employs 100% force method. Other arts use a mixture of both methods, with varying focus on one method or the other.

As a rough estimate, the proportion between applying the flow method and the force method in the following arts are as follows. Yang Style Taijiquan 100-0, Baguazhang 80-20, Xingyiquan 60-40, Flower Set 40-60, Triple Stretch 20-80, Iron Wire 0-100.

With a clear understanding of their underlying philosophy and the required skills and techniques as well as the invaluable experience of breadth and depth, we can modify or improve the proportion between the flow method and the force method in the arts we wish to train in. At first we approach prudently. We have a great advantage of chi flow, which not only erases harmful effects unwittingly derived but also speeds up progress remarkably. With successful experience can progress with more confidence and certainty.

Therefore, if we use Taijiquan as an internal force training method, we can use 100% flow method, or 100% force method, or anywhere in between with varying proportions of the flow method and the force method.

The flow method will be more effective than the force method because the movements of Taijiquan are designed for the flow method. How effective the flow method will be over the force method depends on various factors, like how relaxed is the practitioner when generating an energy flow, how skillful he is in

consolidating force, and how much has he experience in these two and other methods.

But as a rough guide, for most practitioners the force method will only reach to about 40% of the flow method. In other words, if they develop 1000 units of internal force using the flow method, they will only be able to develop 400 units using the force method.

Although the movements of Taijiquan are designed for the flow method, it does not mean that we won't improve the result if we incorporate the force method into the flow method. This is because the force method is actually present, though most Taijiquan practitioners using the flow method to develop internal force successful may not realize it. This in fact is the norm, even among masters.

Masters may have developed a lot of internal force in their many years of training, but they normally do not know what happened. That is why developing internal force takes years. But if we know what happens, and work at it purposefully, we can speed up the progress remarkably. That is why we only take months to develop internal force.

As a rough estimate, if we use 70% flow method and 30% force method, we can develop 1500 units of internal force, when those who use 100% flow method can develop 1000 units, and those who use 100% force method can develop 400 units. Please keep in mind that this is a very rough estimate. Many factors are involved, and even when one factor changes, the estimate will be different. For example, the above estimate is based on practicing Single Whip. If we use Lifting Water, we would have to reduce the proportion of the force method so that a good proportion would be 90% flow method and 10% force method.

Let us look at Iron Wire for comparison. The orthodox approach is to use the force method. Practitioners use 100% force method to develop internal force in Iron Wire training.

It is pertinent to keep in mind that I am referring to those practitioners who have been successful, and they constitute only about 20% of the total number of people who have a chance to practice Iron Wire. The other 80% practice isometric exercises.

I myself used the force method when I practiced Iron Wire many years ago, and produced a lot of internal force in much shorter time than expected. On hindsight I realize that although I was not aware of it at the time, I also incorporated the flow method which I earlier acquired in One-Finger Shooting Zen which I learned from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam.

It is interesting that when I introduced the flow method to the Iron Wire course in Barcelona in May 2012, all the participants, i.e. 100%, found it produced more force than the force method. At the Iron Wire course in Las Vegas in October 2012, only 60% found the flow method more powerful, and 40% found the force method more powerful.

I have not found out the reason for the discrepancy between the Barcelona course of 100% and the Las Vegas course of 60%, though with hindsight I could

say that at the Barcelona course the distinction between the flow method and the force water was clear-cut, but at the Las Vegas course the distinction was merged. In other words, at the Barcelona course when practitioners used the force method, there was no element of the flow method, and vice versa. At the Las Vegas course, when practitioners used the force method, there was some element of the flow method, and vice versa.

But it was evident that the flow method contributed substantially to developing internal force in Iron Wire training. How is this possible? How is it that in Iron Wire where the movements are designed for the force method, incorporating the flow method in it would enhance the result remarkably?

When we know the underlying philosophy, substantiated with actual experience, it is not difficult to find the answer. Energy flow is needed before internal force is consolidated. Past masters who could be very powerful in their Iron Wire might not realize this important fact. The past masters could still be very powerful even when they did not know this fact because of their many years of dedicated training.

With this background knowledge, which is interesting and useful by itself, we can answer the question with insight.

Yes, the flow method exists in other kungfu sets and styles, though masters of these sets and styles may not realize the existence of the flow method even when they have developed a lot of internal force using these sets and styles.

Energy flow is necessary before internal force can be consolidated. If energy flow is necessary, and the masters do not realize it, how can the masters develop a lot of internal force?

The masters may not realize the energy flow, but the energy flow does occur. As the masters do not make a conscious effort to have energy flow, it does not occur every time they train. Suppose they train 10 times, and energy flow occurs 3 times interspacingly.

So, although they have trained 10 times, they actually have consolidated their energy into internal force 3 times. If they train once a day, they would have trained for 30 days, and have consolidated energy into internal force 9 times. Suppose each time they consolidate, they build 10 units of internal force.

Will they build 90 units of internal force in one month? No, it is because the internal force is not built up continuously, some of it would be dissipated. They may have only 50 units of internal force for the month.

Let us see what happens to us in our training when we know the underling philosophy and purposely work towards it. When we use the flow method, we generate a powerful energy flow, not interspacingly but every time we train. Because our energy flow is powerful, we can consolidate not just 10 units of internal force each time, but 20 units. Because we have the benefit of accumulated effect which creates not just an arithmetical progression but a geometrical progression, we will have built not 600 units of internal force in one month but 1000 units.

Other practitioners would have built only 50 units of internal force in one month. This explains why we can attain in a few months what others may need many years.

There are many different techniques and methods to develop internal force. In the Wuzuquan course in December 2012, we employed numerous techniques and methods to develop internal force using movements from the San Zhan set. We found that we could develop a lot of internal force.

But all these different techniques and methods may be generalized into two main categories, which we call the flow method and the force method.

In our school we can use only the flow method, or only the force method, or both in various combinations for any set or style, including Xingyiquan and Flower Set. This is a special benefit available to us. Practitioners of other schools do not have this benefit. Not only they do not differentiate between the flow method and the force method, they also do not differentiate between skills and techniques.

Practitioners of other schools normally practice the techniques of their set or style as it has been traditionally taught, without knowing whether they use the flow method or the force method. If they are fortunate to practice a genuine art, in Xingyiquan it will be 60% flow method and 40% force method, and in Flower Set it will be 40% flow method and 60% force method. In Taijiquan it will be 100% flow method, and in Iron Wire 100% force method. The great majority of practitioners will not be as lucky. They just practice their set or style as physical exercise.

We are in a better position. We can vary the proportion between the flow method and the force method according to our needs and other factors. The estimates given about are for general situations. When the situation changes, like when we change to another exercise or have a different objective, we may modify the proportion accordingly.

How does one know what proportion of the flow method and the force method to use if he does not have sufficient knowledge or experience? A good way is to follow wu-wei, which comes after yu-wei. The yu-wei part is to perform the set or style according to what is taught by a competent teacher. Then enjoy wu-wei. Later you may look back and determine the proportion you have used and assess whether it has been beneficial. In fact, that was how the various estimates were made.

## QUESTION 8

*In Xing Yi Quan, there are 12 animals. Among them are the Dragon, Tiger and Snake, 3 of the 5 important animals in Southern Shaolin Kung Fu. Is there any difference in the external forms, the internal aspects and the applications of these animals in Xing Yi Quan when compared to Southern Shaolin?*

— Sifu Roeland Dijkema

*What is the source of the twelve animals present in Xing Yi Chuan? As it was developed from Shaolin, is it safe to assume these animal forms had already formulated in one way or another? If not, how do you suppose that the founder of Xing Yi Chuan became inspired by these animals? And we know that history tells us that Xing Yi Chuan evolved out of Shaolin martial arts. But is there any record of what specific Shaolin sets Yue Fei was trained in or was known for?*

— Sunwukong

The 12 animal-forms of Xingyiquan are quite different from the 5 animal-forms of Southern Shaolin, like Hoong Ka and Choy Li-Fatt.

The Xingyiquan 12 animal-forms came first, the Southern Shaolin five animal-forms came later, with about 600 years in between. It is therefore incorrect to say that the Xingyiquan animal-forms were derived from the famous Shaolin "five animals", as many people mistakenly think.

I have not seen any Five-Animal Set of Northern Shaolin, but I have some classics showing the five animals of Shaolin Kungfu in the Ming Dynasty (14th to 17th century). As both Northern Shaolin and Southern Shaolin were in existence during the Ming Dynasty, I am not sure whether the five animals refer to Northern Shaolin or Southern Shaolin. The pictures look Southern, but the descriptions of skills point to Northern.

I would guess that as this was the transitional period, the kungfu practiced at the northern Shaolin Monastery in Hunan and at the southern Shaolin Monastery in Fujian was quite similar. It was later that the difference became accentuated.

What is interesting about the pictures of the Shaolin five animals shown in the Ming classics is that they do not look like any of the Southern Shaolin 5 animal-forms. Although the pictures in the classics are named as dragon, snake, tiger, leopard and crane, they do not resemble anything like dragon, snake, tiger, leopard and crane.

All the pictures look alike. If I were to pick one of the five Shaolin animals, I would say all the pictures look like a tiger-form, mainly because the hands are held like claws. I had the classics long ago, at a time when my knowledge of kungfu philosophy was superficial. It was much later that I realized it is not the outward form (that can be shown in pictures) but the spirit of the form (that cannot be shown in pictures) that is important.

The classic clearly explains the spirit involved in the training. The dragon is to

train mind, the snake to train energy, the tiger to train internal force, the leopard to train speed, and the crane to train essence.

What Yue Fei (12th century) learned was Northern Shaolin Kungfu, at a time when the southern Shaolin Monastery was not yet built. Both the spirit and the form of Xingyiquan 12 animals are different from those of Southern Shaolin 5 animals, though there are similarities with animals of various Shaolin styles due to overlapping.

The 12 animal-forms are shown in the videos at <http://www.shaolin.org/video-clips-9/xingyiquan/public/12-animal-forms.html> The spirit of the forms is found in a "song of 12 animal-forms" found in a classic, and reproduced at the webpage above.

I shall summarize the spirit of the Xingyiquan 12-animal forms as follows:

- Dragon - contracting and expanding
- Tiger - courage
- Monkey - agility
- Horse - speed
- Alligator - gliding
- Cockerel - combative
- Hawk - soaring
- Sparrow - skimming
- Snake - sliding
- Ostrich - ramming
- Eagle - gripping
- Bear - stability

The agility as well as the outward form of the monkey are found in all Shaolin styles. The form of the horse and also the snake is similar in Xingyiquan and in Southern Shaolin. Both the spirit and the form of the sparrow are the same in these two Shaolin styles. The form and the spirit of the eagle are the same in Xingyiquan and Eagle Claw Kungfu. The form and the spirit of the bear are similar in Xingyiquan and in Taijiquan.

On the other hand, the difference in both the form and the internal aspects of some animal-forms in Xingyiquan and Southern Shaolin are striking.

Xingyiquan dragon uses the Dragon-Embracing Stance and its spirit is contracting and expanding. Southern Shaolin dragon uses the Horse-Riding Stance or the Bow-Arrow Stance, is often swerving and its internal aspect is to train mind.

Although both Xingyiquan tiger and Southern Shaolin tiger use claws, the way the claws are formed is different. What is tiger-claw in Xingyiquan is eagle-claw in Eagle Claw Kungfu and Southern Shaolin. As both Xingyiquan and Eagle Claw

Kungfu were invented by him and the claws in both arts are similar, apparently Yue Fei was not particular about names.

The alligator is common in Xingyiquan but not found in Southern Shaolin.

The cockerel is very important in Xingyiquan, but in Southern Shaolin it is incorporated into the crane. "Golden Cockerel Stands Solitarily" in Southern Shaolin is sometimes called "White Crane Flaps Wings". Xingyiquan cockerel find its way into Taijiquan, but the spirit is quite different. In Xingyiquan the cockerel is aggressive, but in Taijiquan, like in "Golden Cockerel Stands Solitarily" but the form is different from that in Southern Shaolin, it is unobtrusive.

The ostrich is probably found only in Xingyiquan and not in any other kungfu styles. Some Xingyiquan masters question whether the term "ostrich" was actually used, arguing that the ostrich was not native to China. Personally I do not find this argument valid. The lion is not native to China, but its term is used in many kungfu styles.

There were no records of where Yue Fei derived the 12 animal-forms from. Probably many of the animal-forms were derived from the Shaolin Kungfu he had learned from his master, Zhou Tong, and some Yue Fei invented on his own to meet expedient needs.

Yue Fei was a kungfu genius. He was deified as the god of martial arts. Three kungfu styles - Xingyiquan, Eagle Claw Kungfu and Yue Family Kungfu - and all these styles are quite different in their nature, philosophy and application, and they are all very effective.

It is interesting to note that Yue Fei's teacher, Zhou Tong, was the second generation successor of Chuo Jiao Kungfu, a little known kungfu famous for kicks, invented by Deng Liang. Yue Fei was the third generation successor. But these Chuo Jiao kicks, which would render Taekwondo kicks and Muay Thai kicks rudimentary, are not found in Xingyiquan, Eagle Claw and Yue Family Kungfu.

It was unlikely that Yue Fei sat in his tent with a cup of wine in his hand, thinking of animal-forms like dragons and alligators, and how to compose them into Xingyiquan. This would be the work of a dreamer, not a marshal at the frontline of battles. It was more likely that Yue Fei, finding his generals lacking in some combat techniques and skills, drew from his rich kungfu repertoire techniques and skills to teach the generals to meet their immediate needs.

At first Yue Fei taught the generals only the five elemental fists. It was later, finding that the five elemental fists were not enough in certain combat situations, that he taught them the 12 animal-forms as a supplement.

We go through the same process in our school. Our 16 basic Shaolin combat sequences, for example, were not invented by me sitting comfortably on a sofa with a can of coca cola in my hand, thinking of how to compose fanciful patterns into a course to teach students. It was finding students struggling to use kungfu patterns in free sparring that I drew from my rich repertoire kungfu skills and techniques to teach them so that he could be competent using kungfu in combat. Later when I found that the kungfu techniques are insufficient to meet

simple, fast Boxers' jabs, grapplers' take-downs and attacks from other martial arts, I taught more simple counters against these other arts as a supplement.

The coming Xingyiquan course is also taught to meet immediate needs - the needs to expand kungfu understanding beyond our core Shaolin and Taijiquan syllabuses, to experience and benefit from great styles of great masters.

It was also unlikely that Yue Fei first thought about terms like dragons, hawks and alligators. It was more likely that later masters provided these names as well as the philosophy to explain effective training and application for convenience and better understanding.

As far as I know there were no direct statements on what exact Shaolin sets or arts Yue Fei was trained in and what he used to invent Xingyiquan. But indirect evidence from the classics as well as other literature indicates that he was trained in Northern Lohan Kungfu, Taizu Changquan (Long Fist of First Emperor, i.e. Zhao Kuang Yin, the first emperor of the Song Dynasty who was a Shaolin disciple) and Chuo Jiao Kungfu.

The forms in Xingyiquan resemble those in Lohan Kungfu and Taizu Kungfu. But Chuo Jiao kicks are noticeably absent.

Throughout kungfu history, Yue Fei was most famous for Xingyiquan, then for Eagle Claw Kungfu, the two arts that he invented and trained in after the invention. He was not so well known for Yue Family Kungfu, though all its practitioners as well as informed persons credited its invention to Yue Fei.



## QUESTION 9

*How does Xingyiquan compare to typical Southern Shaolin Kung Fu (such as the Flower Set) as far as philosophy and techniques are concerned?*

— Sifu Roeland Dijkema

Comparing Xingyiquan and Flower Set is both interesting and educational as these two arts manifest and represent vastly different philosophy and practice in fulfilling their goals. A comparative study of them will enable practitioners understand their own arts better even when they do not practice these two arts because the comparison spans a wide range from the simple to the sophisticated which includes many arts in between.

We should also note that Xingyiquan is a kungfu style by itself, whereas Flower Set is a kungfu set in a kungfu style, which is Southern Shaolin. In Xingyiquan there are only two major kungfu sets, namely Wu Xing Lian Huan Quan or Five-Element Continuous Fist, and Shi Er Xing Lian Huan Quan or Twelve-Animal-Form Continuous Fist, though there are many versions of these two sets.

Flower Set is one of many important and well known kungfu sets in Southern Shaolin. Southern Shaolin, as a kungfu style, is open to different interpretations. In its wide sense it includes all kungfu styles that issued from the southern Shaolin Monastery, like White Crane, Hoong Ka, Wing Choon, Choy-Li-Fatt.

Not many people know that there were two southern Shaolin Monasteries, or one but located at two different places, both in Fujian Province of South China. The first southern Shaolin Monastery, built during the Ming Dynasty by imperial decree and known to the public, was situated at the city of Quan Zhou. It was razed to the ground by the Qing Army led by the crown prince, Chen Long, assisted by Lama mercenaries from Tibet using the infamous "flying guillotines". White Crane Kungfu issued from this monastery.

The second southern Shaolin Monastery, built by Chee Seen who escaped from the first southern Shaolin Monastery, was secretive and was situated on the Nine Lotus Mountain. It was also razed to the ground by the Qing Army, led by Pak Mei who originally escaped from the first southern Shaolin Monastery. Hoong Ka, Wing Choon and Choy-Li-Fatt issued from this second southern Shaolin Monastery.

In a narrow sense, Southern Shaolin as a kungfu style refers to the type of kungfu originally practiced at the southern Shaolin Monastery both at Quan Zhou and on Nine Lotus Mountain. Hence, depending on whether the wide or narrow interpretation of the term is used, Southern Shaolin may or may not be the same as kungfu styles like White Crane and Hoong Ka. This apparent confusion occurs only in English. In Chinese, where terms are used for convenience rather than as definite classification, such confusion is absent.

There are some interesting facts about Xingyiquan and Flower Set that are contrary to popular beliefs. Although Xingyiquan is frequently regarded as Wudang Kungfu, and Flower Set as Shaolin, Xingyiquan looks more like Shaolin

Kungfu (in its narrow interpretation) than Wudang Kungfu. Xingyiquan was derived from Northern Shaolin, and had no connection with Wudang Kungfu, the style of kungfu practiced on Wudang Mountain and derivatives from it.

The classification of kungfu styles into Shaolin and Wudang was made only recently in the 19th century. Wang Jin Nan, a kungfu scholar, classified kungfu styles into two main categories, Shaolin and Wudang. He regarded Shaolin as external, and Wudang as internal. He listed Taijiquan, Xingyiquan and Baguazhang as Wudang Kungfu, and all the rest as Shaolin.

This was incorrect, but his classification as well as its reasons have become established, and many people follow them without knowing the facts. Hence, although much of what we practice in Shaolin Kungfu is internal, others think of what we do as external. Although there is nothing internal in what most Taiji practitioners do, most people think of them practicing an internal art.

Flower Set is a shortened and more popularly used term of Plum Flower Set, which is "Meihuaquan" and is shortened to "Huaquan" in Chinese. There is another kungfu style from Northern Shaolin written in Romanized Chinese as "Huaquan".

Both the pronunciation and written Chinese characters of "Huaquan" as a kungfu set, and "Huaquan" as a kungfu style are different, though the Romanized Chinese spelling are the same. The former is pronounced in the first tone, and the latter in the second tone. "Huaquan" as a kungfu set literally means "flower Fist", here "fist" meaning a kungfu set. "Huaquan" as a kungfu style means "Beautiful Fist", here "fist" meaning a kungfu style.

Although Flower Set is regarded as Shaolin Kungfu, it looks more like Wudang Kungfu than Shaolin Kungfu. It is because Flower Set is relative soft and flowing. And although Flower Set is internal, as in the way we practice it in our school, it is generally regarded as external by the public. There are two reasons. First, most people regard Shaolin as external, and secondly most practitioners of Flower Set today practice it as an external art.

With this background, which enriches our understanding and practice of the two arts, let us now compare Xingyiquan with typical Shaolin Kungfu represented here as Flower Set with reference to their philosophy and techniques.

Both Xingyiquan and Flower Set were devised for effective combat.

Xingyiquan was invented by the famous Song Dynasty marshal, Yue Fei, for generals on the battlefield. He based his invention on the needs of the generals and drew inspiration and resources from Northern Shaolin Kungfu. As generals were more likely to fight with other generals individually rather than in mass combat with ordinary soldiers, Xingyiquan was geared toward this purpose.

This does not mean that Xingyiquan is ineffective for mass fighting. If a few opponents attack a Xingyiquan expert from all sides, he would be able to defeat them effectively using purely Xingyiquan techniques. But if he also knows other styles geared towards mass fighting, like Choy-Li-Fatt for example, he would be

more cost-effective using these other styles. Here is an example of the benefit of breadth and depth.

Yue Fei's generals who practiced Xingyiquan would not know Choy-Li-Fatt because Choy-Li-Fatt Kungfu was invented in the Qing Dynasty, 3 dynasties and 6 centuries later than the Song Dynasty. But the generals would use Shaolin styles like Luohanquan or Lohan Kungfu, and Taizuchangquan or First Emperor Long Fist, which were also very effective for mass fighting.

It is worthy of note that the generals were already experts in kungfu. Xingyiquan was taught to them as a supplement. Similarly students who will attend the Xingyiquan course are already good at kungfu. Xingyiquan is taught to them to enhance their kungfu further.

Xingyiquan practitioners should understand this point. If they are caught in mass fighting, they may still use Xingyiquan techniques to fight, but if they also know other techniques that are more suitable for mass fighting, they will be more effective employing these other techniques, though the fighting skills may come from Xingyiquan training. This is another example of the benefit of breadth and depth.

As in other aspects of our training, the philosophy here can be transferred to enrich our daily life. If you are trained as a manager, for example, when you wish to buy a car or go for an overseas holiday, you do not use the same techniques you use to manage your company, you use techniques of buying a car or going for a holiday. But you can transfer your skills as a manager, like planning and implementation, to operate the new chosen techniques.

We in Shaolin Wahnam are very lucky in this aspect. Besides our core training in Shaolin Kungfu or Wahnam Taijiquan, we have a wide range of other kungfu styles to choose as selective, like Xingyiquan, Baguazhang, Wuzuquan, Tantui, Praying Mantis, Eagle Claw, Wing Choon Kungfu and Choy-Li-Fatt.

Even for those of our students who have not trained in any selective styles, they still have breadth and depth, though of course it is not as broad or as deep as those who have attended selective courses. Why? It is because all the selective styles were derived from, or are specialization of, Shaolin Kungfu. In other words, all the techniques of these selective styles can be found in Shaolin Kungfu. It is a matter of selecting them.

Our students may not have the knowledge and experience to select the right techniques. This is true, but their instructors and I have. We have made things easy for our students. We select the best techniques for the required purpose, arrange them in the best way, and teach them to the students. An example is free sparring against those who use Boxing techniques, which in practical terms means the great majority of all other martial artists regardless of the martial arts they practice.

If the students are smart, they follow instructions and get the best benefits. If they attempt to be smarter than their teachers, though they never mean to be disrespectful, they miss the benefits. A common example is that instead of

following the sparring strategy that has been meticulously prepared for them, they think they are smarter by joining a MMA or Muay Thai class as a supplement and learn to fight like MMA or Muay Thai fighters.

In my preparation to teach Xingyiquan, I discovered a bafflingly simple sequence of Xingyiquan techniques that is excellent for this purpose. But before this discovery, I used the same philosophy and the same skills though the techniques are different, like pressing into opponents with Single Tiger, Black Tiger and Fierce Tiger.

What about those who practice Wahnam Taijiquan, will they also have the benefit of breath and depth since these selective styles were derived from Shaolin and not from Taijiquan? Yes, they still will. Actually Taijiquan was also derived from Shaolin, but the repertoire of Taijiquan is wide enough to provide for breadth and depth. For example, to handle Boxing techniques in free sparring our Taijiquan students can use Cloud Hands, Green Dragon and Fierce Dragon, which are Taijiquan counterparts of the Shaolin Single Tiger, Black Tiger and Fierce Tiger.

But students of Xingyiquan or other derivative styles in other schools will not have this advantage. It is because their path is from specialized to general, whereas ours is from general to specialized.

In daily life, for example, they work in the production section of a company and after many years are promoted to become managers. If a problem occurs which concerns accounting or marketing, they would be at a loss.

Our students work as general workers in the company involved in all aspects of accounting, production and marketing. When they are promoted as managers in any department, they can handle problems even when the problems deal with matters outside their departments.

Flower Set evolved from Shaolin Kungfu in the northern Shaolin Monastery also during the Song Dynasty. Like Xingyiquan, Flower Set was not taught to beginners; it was taught to practitioners who were already good at kungfu to enhance their performance further. While the goal is the same, namely combat efficiency, the mode of operation is different.

Xingyiquan techniques, like the thrust-palm and crushing-fist, are meant to kill or seriously injure with just one strike, which served the need of generals in battles.

Xingyiquan practitioners should take note of the philosophical point. Each strike should have not only the force but also the intention to end combat. Hence, bouncing about or generously exchanging blows is out of the question. Not only do you not bounce about and exchange blows, you give no chance for your opponent to do so even when this is his normal way of fighting. If he tries to run away, you chase after him effectively and finish him off with just one strike.

This training will give you an ideal mind-set and strategy to win free sparring competitions. You are trained in the element of threat - both at the receiving and giving side. You know your opponents are not toying with you, but would kill

you with one strike. You are also not toying with your opponents. You would finish him with just one strike, ensuring your own safety at all times.

Xingyiquan is not for the chicken-hearted. There is also no time for hesitation. Your purpose is already set before you enter combat. If you have a chance to strike an opponent decisively, but you hesitate, he will strike you decisively.

On the other hand, Flower Set techniques, like the dragon-hand used in dim mark and cross-hand grip used in chin-na, are meant to disable opponents giving them a chance to recover subsequently, which served the purpose of compassionate monks in the monastery.

You have a variety of choices on how to subdue your opponents. You may grip them with chin-na or dot their vital points with dim mark to disable their fighting ability but allow them to leave to seek remedial treatment. You may fell them onto the ground and place your fist at their head or your two fingers at their eyes telling them non-verbally that you could kill or injure them seriously if you wanted to, but you don't. Or you could smash their groin or break their ribs and end combat immediately. Xingyiquan has done away with these choices.

To subdue your opponents mercifully you need to be of a higher level than them. You may also want to play around with them to demonstrate your combat superiority. Or you may want to trick them or amaze them. To achieve these purposes you need a great variety of techniques. Xingyiquan, born in a battlefield environment, has not time for such luxuries.

Therefore, Xingyiquan techniques are simple, direct and effective. Flower Set techniques are also effective but they are sophisticated and elaborate. Whereas a Xingyiquan practitioner will just thrust his palm or fist directly to defeat an opponent, a Flower Set practitioner may first lock an opponent's arms so that he could not escape before striking him.

There are a lot of kicks, felling attacks and chin-na in Flower Set, but Xingyiquan has done away with these other categories of attack and focuses only on strikes. The rationale behind is that it takes more movements to apply a kick, felling technique or chin-na technique than to apply a strike. If you could successfully apply these preliminary techniques to accomplish one attack, you could have finished him off with one strike.

This is a relevant philosophical point for those who want to win free sparring competitions. It takes more time and more movements for an opponent to take you down onto the ground, to grip your neck to knee-jab you, or to grab your arms in an elaborated lock. While he is making these preliminary movements, you can finish him off with one decisive strike. You must have both the force and intention. If you hesitate, he will defeat you instead.

Xingyiquan was invented in the environment of the battlefield where combat was the first priority. Flower Set was evolved in a temple environment where spiritual cultivation was prominent. This historical background defined the form and direction of the respective arts.

Although our present environments have vastly changed from those when

Xingyiquan was invented and Flower Set was evolved, their historical background influenced how the arts are being practiced today and what benefits we expect to get. For those who wish to have spiritual cultivation while practicing a martial art, Xingyiquan would not be a good choice. They would attain their aims better by practicing Flower Set. Of course we are referring to the genuine arts.

Some people mistakenly think that Xingyiquan is a good art for spiritual cultivation. This mistaken view is probably due to Xingyiquan being regarded as an internal, Wudang art. Both terms, "internal" and "Wudang", suggest spiritual cultivation.

The internal force of Xingyiquan is not used for spiritual cultivation, it is used for combat - to strike down an opponent quickly. The term "Wudang" is mistakenly applied to Xingyiquan. It was not connected to the Wudang Mountain in its development.

On the other hand, those who want to win free sparring competitions, Flower Set is not a good choice, but Xingyiquan is ideal. Unless they are already good at combat, Flower Set is too sophisticated; they are unlikely to have the knowledge and skills to use Flower Set techniques effectively.

Moreover, wearing of gloves, which is a common requirement in many competitions, will restrict the application of many Flower Set techniques. Thirdly, the sophisticated footwork, which is excellent for those who are well trained, may backfire as a liability for many people and make it easy for their opponents to fell them or kick them.

Xingyiquan is ideal. There are no elaborated techniques or footwork that may backfire as liabilities. The simple and direct techniques and footwork are excellent for present day competition situations. Wearing gloves would not limit their usefulness.

These limitations in Xingyiquan and Flower Set apply to most other people. They do not apply to us. We are elite. Because of breadth and depth we can change setbacks to strengths. We can do so because of many favorable reasons, especially that we understand the underlying philosophy and every time we practice it is a training of energy and mind.

Besides applying Xingyiquan internal force for combat, we can also use it for spiritual cultivation as well as for good health, vitality, longevity and mental clarity. After a typical Xingyiquan training we can go into a chi flow, which will overcome pain and illness, and contribute to good health, vitality and longevity. Or we can enter standing meditation, which contributes to mental clarity and spiritual cultivation.

Although Flower Set techniques are too sophisticated for most other people to apply effectively in combat, because of our understanding of combat principles we can select from the Flower Set techniques that are most suitable for various combat situations, ranging from simple ones like those commonly found in today's free sparring competitions to advanced ones like combat between

masters.

The thread-hand technique we now use in our basic application against fast Boxing jabs and crosses, for example, are taken from Flower Set. At masters' levels, Flower Set provides techniques for chin-na and dim-mark.

Xingyiquan and Flower Set are great arts. Their philosophy and techniques are vastly different. A comparative study enhances our understanding and performance not only of these two arts but also other arts as well as daily living.

## QUESTION 10

*Can you please elaborate a little about the background and character of General Yue Fei, who is regarded as the God of Martial Art in China?*

*For people in leadership positions, what are the qualities that Xingyiquan will promote, enhance and strengthen?*

— Sifu Lee Wei Joo

In the English language, Yue Fei is often referred to as a great general, but in the Chinese language he is often referred to as a great marshal, which he was, with many generals under him. Hence, in Chinese we read and hear of Yue Yuan Shuai instead of Yue Jiang Jun, i.e. Marshal Yue instead of General Yue.

Yue Fei is deified as "wu sheng". The other great warrior who is also deified as "wu sheng" is General Guan Yu of the Three-Kingdom Period, about 10 centuries before Yue Fei.

Guan Yu was also known as Guan Yun Chang. He is often referred to as Guan Gong, which means Lord Guan. He was famous for the use of Guan Dao, which is named after him and it means Guan's Big Knife. Yue Fei, on the other hand, was famous for his metal spear as well as bow and arrows.

"Wu sheng" can be variously translated into English. "Wu" means "martial", and may sometimes mean "war". "Sheng" means "sage" and may also be translated as "god".

The term "Da Sheng", meaning "Great Sage", is usually used to refer to the Monkey God, who was honoured by the Jade Emperor of Heaven as the "Great Sage Equal to Heaven". Interestingly, the term "god" or "shen" (note: not sheng) has never been used in Chinese to refer to the Monkey God, who is many levels higher in spiritual development than gods in Chinese culture.

Hence, "wu shen" may be translated as the "God of War". That, in fact, is what Guan Yu is usually referred to, though I prefer to refer to him as the "God of Righteousness" because he is best known for righteousness and not for warfare though he was a great warrior. As this term was coined by me, not many people, at least not now, may have heard of the God of Righteousness.

Hence, Yue Fei, being wu sheng, may be referred to as the God of War too by English speaking people, though most of them when they hear of the term "God of War" would probably think of Guan Yu. But, in a moment of inspiration, I prefer to translate "wu sheng" in the case of Yue Fei as the God of Martial Art, as he was the first patriarch of three styles of Chinese martial arts, namely Xingyiquan, Eagle Claw Kungfu and Yue Family Kungfu. As in the case of the God of Righteousness, not many people, at least not at present, would have heard of the God of Martial Art.

It is also worthy of note that the concept of "god of war" is normally not in the mind of Chinese speaking people when they come across the term "wu sheng". In other words, Chinese speaking people would not think of Yue Fei and Guan Yu



as Gods of War. If Chinese speaking people wish to refer to a god of war in the Chinese language, they would probably use the term "zhan shen".

The term "wu sheng" carries more respect and reverence than the term "zhan shen". "Zhan shen" would give connotations of a fighter who brings destruction, often with disregard to those involved. "Wu sheng" gives connotations of a great warrior who fights for a noble cause, and would avoid destruction if possible.

This linguistic and cultural background is not only interesting but also beneficial. As I have mentioned in an answer elsewhere, a great language like English and Chinese is not merely a vehicle for communicating ideas and emotions, but also greatly influences the way we think and develop. This background knowledge not only reflects that Marshal Yue Fei was not a fighter who brought random destruction but a great warrior with principles, but also reminds us that our martial art training is not just to exchange blows but leads to our development of courage and righteousness. These qualities are very important for people in leadership positions.

Yue Fei (1102-1143) was born to a poor family during the Song Dynasty. According to a legend, Yue Fei was the reincarnation of the garuda, da pang in Chinese, a legendary gigantic bird that provided shade and protected the Buddha. Seeing that the Song government was corrupt and was invaded by the Jurchens, the Buddha sent the garuda to protect the people.

Yue Fei's father saw a big bird fly into the house just before Yue Fei was born. That was how Yue Fei got his name. "Fei" means "fly", and referred to the flying big bird.

Unlike other babies, Yue Fei never cried. An immortal, disguised as a wandering priest, told Yue Fei's father that when Yue Fei cried, the father should put the baby and the mother in a big earthen jar. A few days later the baby cried. This triggered off a huge flood that destroyed the village. But the floating earthen jar saved Yue Fei and his mother.

His mother tattooed the words "jin zhong bau guo", which mean "extreme loyalty to repay the nation" on the back of Yue Fei. Yue Fei learned martial art and strategies from a great Shaolin master, Zhou Tong. His classmates were Lin Chong and Lu Jun Yi, two great kungfu masters who later joined the outlaws on Liang Mountain in the legends of the Water Margins.

Yue Fei joined the army, and due to his abilities and successful military campaigns rose from being a private to a marshal within a short time. The Jurchens from the north had sacked the northern Song Dynasty, established the Jin Dynasty and took the Song emperor and some loyal families as captives. One of the princes escaped and set up the Southern Song Dynasty. Yue Fei was determined to drive out the Jurchens and restore the Song.

Besides being highly skilled in martial art, Yue Fei was also a scholar. Despite being very busy with military planning, training and campaigns, he still found time for his scholarly pursuits. His favorite readings were Sun Tzu's Art of War and Spring and Autumn Annals, especially Confucius' commentaries. His

calligraphy had special flowing characteristics of its own. He produced some poetic works.

Lines from his famous *Man Jiang Hong*, or *The River is Fully Red*, are frequently quoted still today, like the following.

*Thirty years of work and fame are like dust and dirt.  
Eight thousand miles of travel one can only see clouds and the moon.  
But I won't wait in idleness  
When the hair of a young man has turned white  
For empty sorrow*

Yue Fei's campaigns against the Jurchens were very successful. In between campaigns, Yue Fei taught Xingyiquan to his generals, and Eagle Claw Kungfu to his soldiers. His army was well disciplined and highly efficient in combat.

Once he had only 800 men, but defeated the enemy of 50,000. This led the Jurchen commander to comment that they could move Mount Thai, the highest mountain in China, but not Yue Fei's armies.

Yue Fei and his generals were at the battlefield for years, dutifully fighting for the Song government despite knowing that many high ranking ministers were corrupt. Once a general asked Yue Fei when he thought there would be peace.

"When civilian officials do not love money and military officials are not afraid to die, peace will come naturally," Yue Fei answered with much wisdom.

Yue Fei was about to not only to drive the Jurchens completely out Song territories, but also to capture the Jurchen capital. However, he waited for permission from the emperor before taking action. He sent a detailed report to the emperor.

But imperial officials were corrupt. Both the emperor, Gaozong, and his prime minister, Qin Gui, were not keen to defeat the Jurchens, because the Jurchens would then have to release the captured former but rightful emperor, Gaozong's father, who would then restore his reign. Gaozong and Qin Gui secretly made peace with the Jurchens, and ordered Yue Fei to stop his campaign. Receiving the emperor's order one morning prompted Yue Fei to write: "Thirty years of work and fame are like dust and dirt".

The Jurchens reneged on the peace treaty and attacked the Song. Again Yue Fei pushed them back decisively. The emperor and the prime minister became anxious. They plotted to call back Yue Fei and kill him!

The emperor sent out an imperial decree in the form of a gold plate to call Yue Fei from the battle front-line back to the palace. Kungfu masters in the public knew about it and they intercepted the imperial decree.

The emperor continuously sent out the decree each time the earlier one was intercepted. Eleven imperial decrees on gold plates were intercepted at various times and places, but the twelfth got through to Yue Fei. This constitute the story of "The Twelve Gold Plates".

Yue Fei himself and his generals knew about the plot to kill him. The generals begged Yue Fei not to return to the palace. Indeed, there was a tradition honoured by emperors of all dynasties that a marshal or a general at a battlefield had the right to reject an imperial decree.

Yue Fei took off his attire and showed his tattooed words to the generals, "extremely loyalty to repay the nation". Yue Fei said he would rather be killed than disobey his mother's words.

Sure enough, when Yue Fei, his eldest son, Yue Yun, and a general, Zhang Xian, walked into the palace over a trap, hidden palace guards pulled up trap ropes and tied them together. The three were brought before the prime minister, Qin Gui, who accused them of treason and rebellion.

Indeed, Yue Fei's army had become so huge that he could easily overthrow the Song government had he wanted to. But, of course, he was loyal to the emperor despite knowing that the emperor plotted to kill him.

A famous general, Nan Shi Zhong, asked Qin Gui what evidence he had for his serious accusations. Qin Gui replied that if the accusations were true, they would be in trouble. This expression, "if the accusations were true", but without producing any evidence, or "mo xu you" in Chinese, has entered the Chinese language to mean a trumped-up charge.

No one could produce any evidence against Yue Fei. Qin Gui and his wife were sitting by their eastern window when his wife came up with a plot to poison Yue Fei, Yue Yun and Zhang Xian while they were in prison. Later this came to be called the Eastern Window Plot.

Yue Fei was only 39 when he was murdered.

The succeeding emperor, Xiaozhong, cleared all charges against Yue Fei and bestowed many honours posthumously on the famous marshal. A temple for Yue Fei was built at the beautiful West Lake in Hangzhou. Two iron statues of Qin Gui and his wife were made to kneel before the temple for the wrong they did to Yue Fei. For centuries they were spat on and cursed by visitors.

Later Chinese pastry makers made from flour two figures to resemble Qin Gui and his wife, fried them in oil, and ate them. This has become a popular Chinese pastry called "youzhagui" or oil-fried Gui.

Yue Fei fought a total of 126 battles, but did not lose a single one. How did he achieve this incredible feat?

Yue Fei's grandson, Yue Ke, provided a description of Yue Fei's military methods;

1. **Careful Selection:** Yue Fei selected his soldiers carefully. He believed that one good soldier was better than a hundred mediocre ones. When a new army of soldiers joined his, he filtered out the weak and old and retained only the strong and fit.
2. **Good Training:** He provided good training to his soldiers. He taught his soldiers Eagle Claw Kungfu, and his generals Xingyiquan. These kungfu styles proved to be very effective in battle.
3. **Rewards and Punishments:** His rewards were handsome and punishments

severe but both were clear and fair. Once he ordered his own son to be beheaded for falling from horseback. His son's life was spared only when many generals knelt to beg for his mercy.

4. **Clear Orders:** His orders were always clear and easy for his generals and soldiers to carry out. Whoever failed to carry out the orders were severely punished.
5. **Strict Discipline:** Whenever the army crossed a countryside or passed a town or village, fields and properties were left intact. Everyone had to pay for goods they bought.
6. **Close Fellowship:** Yue Fei maintained close fellowship with his generals and soldiers. He ate the same food as they, and often shared the same tent with his generals.

Yue Fei taught Xingyiquan to his generals. People in leadership positions today are also generals. Xingyiquan is effective in promoting, enhancing and strengthening qualities that generals of both classical times and modern times need.

A very important quality is decision making. Many top business executives have told me that making a wrong decision is better than not making any decision. Nothing, not even making a loss, is worse than dilly dallying in business.

Xingyiquan forces us not just to make a decision, but to make a good decision fast. Other kungfu styles also enable us to make good and fast decisions, but Xingyiquan is especially suited for this purpose. Why is it so?

It is so because of the nature of Xingyiquan combat. In combat, Xingyiquan is simple, direct and powerful, and is almost always pressing forward.

When an opponent throws a Xingyiquan exponent a punch, because there are not many techniques to choose from, the Xingyiquan exponent's decision in what counter to respond is likely to be faster than another exponent practicing a kungfu style with many choices, like Baguazhang for example.

The fact that in Xingyiquan the exponent has to move forward will force him to make a fast decision in his response. If he practice an art that allows him to bounce back, like in Boxing, or to sink back, as in Taijiquan, he may delay his decision in making a response. He will not be hit even when his decision is slower because he has moved back from the attack.

But this is not the case with a Xingyiquan exponent. He is moving into the attack. If his decision is not fast, he will be hit.

The interesting fact is that as long as he has learnt Xingyiquan from a competent teacher, as long as he responds with a Xingyiquan technique, it will be the right response. Those who have not learnt Xingyiquan, or have not learnt it from a competent teacher, may not understand what is said here.

So the nature of Xingyiquan combat is such that a practitioner has to make a decision fast. And as long as he makes a fast decision, it will be the right decision!

For people in leadership positions, it is important to make decisions. Making a wrong decision is often better than not making any decision. In Xingyiquan,

practitioners are trained to make good and fast decisions. Isn't Xingyiquan good training for those who aspire to leadership positions?

This interesting quality applies to Xingyiquan but may not apply to other martial arts. In other martial arts, practitioners may make fast or slow decisions. Regardless of whether their decisions are fast or slow, they may not be right decisions, though it is better than not making any decisions. But in Xingyiquan, practitioners cannot choose to make slow decisions, they have to make fast decisions. When they make a decision, even when it is done very fast, it will be the right decision.

Hence, for people aspiring to leadership positions, if they do not have this quality of making fast and right decisions, practicing Xingyiquan will promote it. If they already have this quality, practicing Xingyiquan will enhance it. In Xingyiquan, as they move forward into combat, their decision making has to be faster and faster.

If it is enhanced, practicing Xingyiquan will strengthen it. In other martial arts, other practitioners may not employ this quality every time, like when they retreat or when they wait for their opponents to attack. In Xingyiquan, practitioners press in to attack relentlessly, thus strengthening their ability to make fast and right decisions.

Another very important quality for people in leadership positions is courage. Having made a decision, you must have the courage to carry it out.

Xingyiquan is excellent in providing this courage. It is more effective in this respect than many other martial arts. In some arts like Judo and Taijiquan, the lack of courage can be compensated by patience. If you are not courageous enough to go in to attack your opponent, you can patiently wait for opportunities. In Xingyiquan you are trained to courageously go in to strike down your opponent.

But courage must not be confused with bravado. In some martial arts like Karate and Taekwondo, exponents charge in to exchange blows. This is bravado. Courage should be tempered with wisdom. You move in courageously but with the wisdom to ensure you are safe. As a person in leadership position, you move into the market courageously to gain profits, but you ensure your company will not lose due to carelessness.

If you lack courage but aspire to leadership positions, Xingyiquan will promote this quality in you. If you already have courage, Xingyiquan will enhance it. Then Xingyiquan will strengthen your quality of courage.

Besides courage, to move in effectively to gain victory in martial art as well as in leadership positions, you also require mental clarity and internal force. Xingyiquan is excellent in promoting, enhancing and strengthening these two qualities.

Two other qualities that people in leadership positions need are loyalty and responsibility. Loyalty is not directly learnt by practicing Xingyiquan, but its first patriarch, Yue Fei, certainly inspires us with loyalty. Responsibility can be learnt

from practicing Xingyiquan, but the story of Yue Fei enhances and strengthens our sense of responsibility.

Loyalty is not just upward, but downward as well. Yue Fei was extremely loyal not just to the emperor above him, but also loyal to his generals and soldiers below him as well as the Song people in general. His loyalty was firmly established in the words, "Extreme Loyalty to Repay the Nation", permanently tattooed on his back.

It is often debated whether Yue Fei was loyal to the emperor to a fault, whether it would be better and righteous if he placed priority of his loyalty to the people below instead of to the emperor above in the demonstration of his extreme loyalty to the nation.

In debating this question, one should also consider the perspective of time. In Yue Fei's time, the nation was symbolized by the emperor. To people in the modern age the nation is generally symbolized by the people.

Practicing Xingyiquan will promote a sense of responsibility if a practitioner does not have it initially, and will enhance and strengthen it if it is already present. Unlike some kungfu styles where many techniques are compassionate, every Xingyiquan technique is combat-ending. Xingyiquan practitioners have to use their Xingyiquan with much responsibility.

Some external martial arts are brutal, but being brutal is not the same as being combat-ending. Indeed, Xingyiquan is elegant though combat-ending if the practitioner executing the technique wishes to, otherwise he may hold the technique just before hitting, which manifests his sense of responsibility.

On the other hand, these external martial artists do not hold their strikes. In fact they often increase their brutality by working themselves into a frenzy, as if to lose whatever sense of responsibility they may have so as to punish their opponents brutally. But their brutal strikes, while being destructive physically as well as spiritually to their opponents as well as to themselves, are not combat-ending, or else they would not continue to exchange blows. This type of training is not suitable for those who aspire to leadership positions.

Xingyiquan is combat-ending because of its tremendous internal force, for which Xingyiquan is famous. What would be the case if a Xingyiquan practitioner does not have internal force? Then he is not practicing Xingyiquan correctly. It is like a manager without authority. Both the bogus Xingyiquan practitioner and the bogus manager are making a mockery of themselves. What they do is counter-productive to leadership positions.

A sense of responsibility, or the lack of it, is famously manifested in the story of Yue Fei. Qin Gui, the prime minister, accused Marshal Yue Fei of rebellion and treason, but Qin Gui had no evidence to substantiate his accusations. His justification was that if the accusations were true, it would be big trouble. This concept of "if the accusations were true" is now established in Chinese idiom as "mo xu you" and reminds us of our responsibility.

If you merely hear about accusations and join in to condemn the accused

without sufficient evidence, you show a lack of responsibility. If you strongly accuse someone without sufficient evidence, it is worse. It does not mean that the accusations cannot be true, but it is being responsible to make accusations only when you have sufficient evidence and are ready to show it. This is a mark of people in leadership positions.

The historical background and the character of Marshal Yue Fei are inspiring. He was deified as "Wu Sheng", which is often translated as "God of War" but I translate it as "God of Martial Art".

Xingyiquan was developed by Yue Fei and taught to generals for the battlefield. Practicing genuine Xingyiquan promotes, enhances and strengthens qualities of decision-making, courage, loyalty and responsibility which are very important for people in leadership positions.

## QUESTION 11

*Sifu, you wrote:*

*"It is not because the generals did not know a lot of combat techniques that they practiced Xingyiquan, it was precisely because they knew a lot of combat techniques that they could use Xingyiquan, with its few techniques, effectively."*

*To get the most benefit from training the depth of Xingyiquan, how much spread should a student first have in another art with more techniques (such as Eagle Claw). If a beginner was to start with Xingyiquan, and have no knowledge of many techniques, would that student find him/herself limited. Who would be in a better position to train the depth of Xingyiquan - a student with a lot of experience (in other arts) with an average Sifu, or a fresh beginner student with no other experience but with a very good Sifu?*

— Sifu Matt Fenton

Xingyiquan is marvelous. It is profundity in simplicity. But one could only appreciate its simplicity when he is already profound.

My own experience would be a good example. Initially I found Xingyiquan inadequate for combat. I thought Xingyiquan would be effective if an opponent used simple attacks, like what is found in modern day sparring and fighting such as straight-forward punches and kicks.

I thought, wrongly, that if an opponent used sophisticated attacks, like the Shaolin 72 chin-na techniques, a Xingyiquan exponent would have much difficulty. He would have to depend on his tremendous internal force to counter sophisticated attacks. These ideas occurred to me at a time when I was already quite accomplished, when I could defeat other martial artists, including masters, quite comfortably.

It was only recently (about 2012) when I prepared to teach Xingyiquan and researched deeply into the art that I had my Xingyiquan "enlightenment", that I suddenly realized Xingyiquan was effective against any attack, including very sophisticated ones.

Without false modesty, it is not unreasonable to believe that if I could not see the profundity of Xingyiquan at a time when I was already quite accomplished in martial art, many people, including Xingyiquan masters today, would also be unable to see its profundity.

Their inability to see the profundity of Xingyiquan is not because they have not practiced Xingyiquan deeply, but because, I believe, this profundity was lost during its transmission, and modern masters did not have the wide understanding of kungfu philosophy to recover it. After all, most kungfu practitioners today, including masters, could not use their kungfu techniques for simple combat, they had to resort to kick-boxing, let alone use simple techniques to counter sophisticated attacks.

With hindsight I realize that I already had the wide understanding of kungfu



philosophy before, but still did not know the profundity of Xingyiquan because I did not address myself to that question. It was on one fine day when I thought of how to apply Xingyiquan in modern day free sparring competitions that I had a glimpse of its profundity.

This glimpse was a vintage point that opened up to the profundity of Xingyiquan against any attack, including sophisticated ones. It also led me to answer a question I had been thinking in the past, i.e. why did Xingyiquan use the footwork the way it did, which was quite different from other kungfu styles. I discovered that Xingyiquan footwork excellently complimented its profound but simple-looking combat techniques.

With this background, we can better appreciate the answers to the questions below.

1. To get the most benefit from training the depth of Xingyiquan, how much spread should a student first have in another art with more techniques (such as Eagle Claw)?
2. If a beginner was to start with Xingyiquan, and had no knowledge of many techniques, would that student find him/herself limited?
3. Who would be in a better position to train the depth of Xingyiquan - a student with a lot of experience (in other arts) with an average sifu or a fresh beginner student with no other experience but with a very good sifu?

If the student has an excellent teacher who understands the depth of Xingyiquan and is willing to teach it, the student needs not have any spread in another art to benefit from the profundity of Xingyiquan. He just follows the teaching of the teacher. The important point here is that the teacher himself must have the profundity as well as the teaching skills to impart the profundity.

If the student has spread, provided that he already has basic skills, he will benefit more than if he had no spread. The wider the spread, i.e. the more techniques and skills from other styles he knows, the better will be his understanding and performance of Xingyiquan in its profundity. If the student does not have basic skills, like good stances, exploding force, fluidity of movement, his spread would be detrimental.

For example, in Xingyiquan the internal force in a strike comes from the shoulder, whereas in most other styles it comes from the dan tian. If he has not learned other styles, a Xingyiquan student can still explode force from his shoulder if his teacher has the methods to teach him.

If the student has also learned from other styles how to explode force from his dan tian, not only he will learn a new method of exploding force from his shoulders, but also his earlier training will enhance his new learning.

Here the teacher must be competent, he has to ensure that the student's earlier training does not interfere with the new learning, but enhances it. The student must follow the instructions respectfully. If he tries to be smarter than his teacher, and explode force from his dan tian instead of from his shoulders, he may have more force initially but eventually the two methods may contradict each other.

A fresh beginner without any prior experience of martial art will not be limited when he learns Xingyiquan from a good teacher. In fact, when learning Xingyiquan, generally it is better for students to have no martial art experience than have experience. This is because of two reasons.

Xingyiquan is quite different from many other styles of kungfu and other martial arts. Their previous experience is more likely to interfere with rather than help their new Xingyiquan learning.

Secondly, good teachers are rare. Many kungfu teachers are not even mediocre. They teach forms for demonstration and kick-boxing for combat instead of genuine kungfu. Such teachers will not have the knowledge and skills to enable their students not be distracted by their previous experience.

This situation does not occur in our school. Our instructors are well trained. Even when fresh beginners learn Xingyiquan from our instructors, the students would not find themselves limited.

A fresh beginner with no experience but with a very good teacher will be in a better position to train the depth of Xingyiquan than another student with a lot of experience in other arts but with an average teacher.

In kungfu training, especially in a profound art like Xingyiquan, a good teacher is generally more important than a good student or a good art. This is mainly because the teacher is the most influential factor in determining what and how a student trains.

Even in a straight-forward external art like Wing Choon, a good teacher will ensure that his students do not sustain injuries in their training, and be able to use Wing Choon for combat. A bad teacher may cause his students a lot of injuries in random free sparring, and use kick-boxing instead of Wing Choon techniques in fighting.

Even when a student may have experience in other arts, his Wing Choon training will be determined by his Wing Choon teacher, and not by what he has learned elsewhere. In a profound art like Xingyiquan, a good teacher is even more important.

In comparing arts, a student will generally get more benefits learning a low-level art from a good teacher, than learning a high-level art from a bad teacher. Xingyiquan is of a higher level than Eagle Claw. The former was for generals, the latter for ordinary soldiers. Actually Eagle Claw is a high level art, but compared to Xingyiquan it is of a lower level.

If a student learns Eagle Claw from a good teacher, the student will be healthy and have vitality, and be able to use Eagle Claw for combat. If he learns Xingyiquan from a bad teacher, he may hurt himself insidiously in his training, and use kick-boxing to fight like children.

Let us now compare Eagle Claw with Boxing. Eagle Claw is a high level art, and Boxing is low level. Many Boxers may disagree.

If a student learns Boxing from a good teacher, the student will be able to use

Boxing for combat. He may still be hurt in his training, and in Boxing the injuries are usually left unattended to. But at least the good teacher will teach him how to avoid being hit.

If he learns Eagle Claw from a bad teacher, the student will be unable to use Eagle Claw for combat. He may use kick-boxing randomly in free sparring, and sustain a lot of injuries in his generous exchanges of blows with his sparring partners. The bad teacher will not teach him how to avoid being hit. If he did, he would not be a bad teacher.

The best, of course, is when the three components - the art, the teacher and the students - are good. Such an excellent combination occurred when Xingyiquan was taught by Yue Fei to the generals - a great art, a great teacher and very good students.

We in Shaolin Wahnam can do even better. The generals learned Xingyiquan for only one purpose - to strike down opponents effectively. Besides combat efficiency we can also have good health, vitality, longevity, mental freshness and spiritual joys from our Xingyiquan practice. We are so used to these benefits that sometimes we forget that these benefits are not attainable by most other martial artists.